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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 630. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 26TH, 1901. [ONE PENNY.

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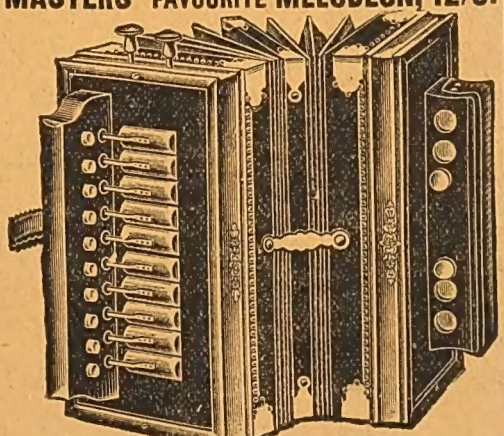

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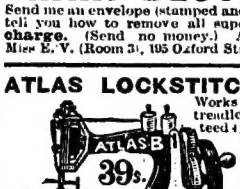

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SHORT STORIES

No. 630.] For the Week Ending January 26th, 1901. [ONE PENNY.

MY FIRST APPEARANCE ON ANY STAGE.

ALTHOUGH my infancy and earlier childhood was passed in somewhat of a nomad existence, I am not, dear reader, the offspring of strolling players, as the title of my story and this explanation might lead you to suppose, neither was I born in a gipsy's tent.

At the time to which this story refers my father held a captain's commission in a marching regiment. I was the firstborn, and at that time only child of my parents, the apple of their eye, their chief source of joy and satisfaction.

I was duly dandled, and cuddled, and cooed to by fond mother and attentive nurse.

I was—like most other infants—inflicted on all my parent's friends, and even casual visitors. I was magnificently apparelled, and young ladies consulting my mother about a child's stall at a coming bazaar, left our house in confused astonishment at the number and variety of articles absolutely necessary for a baby's wardrobe, and doubtless inwardly and fervently thanked Heaven they had nothing to do with children, as a complete bazaar full of things seemed necessary for the outfit of a single infant.

How could it be that more articles connected with the proper rigging out of "baby" were not sent? and why? oh why! were there not more purchasers of those useful and dainty things?

I had just completed the first year of my existence, had cut several teeth with singular success, having avoided everything in the nature of fits by letting off steam in continuous kicking and screaming, pronounced at the time an excellent sign of a sound constitution and healthy lungs.

I was, what is called, a fine, promising boy, and from a family point of view, satisfied my parents' highest aspirations; had they heard my nurse express herself, as she frequently did, as to "the fractiousness of that screeching baby as has near wore me out," much solemn denunciation of her wicked untruthfulness, and even instant dismissal, would, I feel convinced, have been the immediate result.

At the time, then, that I had travelled about a year along the road towards the grave, my mother was in a very weak state of health, and suffered a perfect martyrdom from neuralgia, that subtle and agonizing tormentor of nervous and delicate women.

The house we lived in, and in fact, the whole town where we were stationed was somewhat low-lying and rather damp; a change to higher ground and a more bracing atmosphere had therefore been recommended by the family physician, and my father, having obtained a short leave, was about to take advantage of a long-standing invitation from some friends in Wales, which would afford my mother the desired change, while my father hoped to get some good shooting over a well-preserved manor.

Part of the plan, which much distressed my poor mother, was that I, the infant prodigy and sole representative of "the family," was to be left behind to the care of my nurse, in order that the "rest and quiet," so essential to the cure of neuralgia, should be insured by my separation from my too fond parent, who doubtless owed much of the suffering she endured to her constant devotion to my refractory self during the noisy term of teething.

The time of departure had been arranged so that the travellers should catch a night express at a junction some five or six miles from the garrison town where we were quartered; this distance was to be accomplished in a roomy, close carriage, hired for the occasion from the nearest livery stable.

The lateness of the start, I verily believe, had been agreed upon, or at all events acceded to, by my mother with a view to my being asleep at the appointed hour, so that my tender attachment to herself should not receive the rude shock of separation at a time when my weeping and wailing would certainly follow my being

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left alone in the nest, and find an echo in her heart during her whole absence from home. At the last moment, instructions of the most complicated and intricate nature had to be imparted to nurse; a dietary table, list of forbidden fruit, and programme for the day had to be written out and pinned above the nursery mantelshelf, for constant reference and the proper guidance of the guardian of my valuable little person.

Need I say that those documents, and the instructions

I was duly dandled and cooed to by fond mother and attentive nurse.

so clearly set forth therein, were as obstinately ignored and consistently neglected as the most minute direction verbally given by the commander-in-chief of my nursery when at home. My nurse, when the missus had gone, was determined, in military parlance, to "stand at ease," and even "fall out," if so inclined.

Portmanteaux, gun-cases, hat and bonnet boxes, and indeed boxes of all kinds, were piled upon the fly in lofty confusion, long before my dear mother could be induced to leave—torn from, I believe, was her own expression—her darling fast asleep; little did she suspect, under the influence of a favourite soothing syrup, administered shortly before by faithful nurse, "to stop the squalling o' the young brat," as she meant to be "off duty" as soon as the drum-major—as she disrespectfully calls her mistress—turns her back, and not do any "sentry-go" that evening.

She is going to meet her own particular "Tommy Atkins," servant to one of the subalterns of the gallant 15th, and with him enjoy the pleasures of the town, and probably partake of shrimps and ginger beer in his sweet society, or—who knows?—even a glass of port wine and a bath bun, or such like delicacies, at some "restorong" or other.

When the fly, with its load of boxes, had got fairly on its journey, my father soon discovered that the pace somewhat resembled that of a snail with his shell on his back. The horses—regular old stick-in-the-muds at best—seemed much overweighted with the lumbering carriage and its heavy load of luggage; the road, being of clay and wet, was sticky to the last degree; and the driver seemed to have been behaving very differently from what was becoming in the staunch teetotaler of many years' standing he stoutly declared himself to be, to the accompaniment of many a naughty word. My father's peremptory commands to advance, issued with sharp military abruptness, and even his attempted eloquence in language scarcely parliamentary, had a slightly sobering effect on the driver, but failed entirely to stimulate the rigid joints and bare-ribbed frames of the worn-out cattle. The result of the frequent altercations was to drive my poor mother frantic with pain in her head, and the horses and fly into the station some ten minutes after the express had passed through.

More "language" from Jehu, mingled with insulting remarks about "folks keepin' the 'osses waitin' 'alf-an-hour after 'e was all ready to start."

My mother inwardly pleaded guilty to this accusation and, in consequence, tried to soothe the fervour of my father's wrath; she consoled and congratulated herself on her returning to hover once more over the couch of her sleeping and much worshipped cherub.

There was nothing for it but to turn round and make the best of the way back; my mother's head racked by the rattling and jingling of the windows and wheels of the fly, my father much in the condition of a threatening and grumbling volcano.

Arrived at last in front of their so recently quitted home, the luggage was soon returned to the house; and while my father was refusing to contribute anything towards the further refreshment of the driver—on what seemed to be a holiday or off-day from teetotalism—my mother entered the hall, to be confronted by a weeping housemaid, who ran up the kitchen stairs to admit her, having just realised the arrival, and had barely time to push Private Jones through the kitchen door into the area.

The cause of the weeping not being at all apparent, my mother was naturally much astonished and somewhat alarmed; every effort to get at the cause of this manifestation of grief was only rewarded by the girl becoming more thoroughly dissolved in tears than ever, till my father coming in and demanding to know the cause of this extraordinary scene, the lachrymose maid managed to sob forth:

"Oh, if you please, mum, cook 'ave gone out with her sergeant, and though nuss said as she were a-goin' out too, and ast me to listen if baby should cry. I heerd her come in agin, but can't find her nowheres in the 'ouse, and the blessed hinfant, if you please, mum, 'aven't cried a mossel since you left, mum!"

My mother and father both rushed upstairs to the nursery, overcome by the housemaid's story, when, what was their amazement, nay, horror, to find, not only the nurse absent, but the year-old darling of their hearts vanished, cradle and all!

Around lay my little night-clothes, appealing mutely to the rent hearts of my parents; clearly it was no ordinary mischief that the wretched woman—my nurse—was up to, but a premeditated and planned abduction of the vilest kind, and evidently prompted by the most sordid motives.

Further dismay and almost despair overwhelmed my parents, when they discovered drawers and wardrobes

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thrown wide, the contents in complete confusion and disorder; my best pelisse and other clothes gone, together with some valuable lace belonging to my mother.

Apparently, the fiend in human guise meant to sell me as the child of gentle though unfortunate parents, to some doting couple without a child of their own, and who would ask no awkward questions.

"Why, oh why!" cried my mother, "was I ever wicked enough to leave my darling to be stolen away and sold like a slave? I shall go mad! I shall go mad!"

My father seeing a piece of paper covered with writing near the fireplace, ran to pick it up, thinking it might give some clue to the whereabouts of the runaway and his boy.

Alas! it was but the remains of my menu, so tenderly prepared by my mother but a few short hours ago, part of which had already been used in lighting the gas.

Further questioning of the housemaid elicited renewed sobs and tears, but little else; all she knew she had told at first, except that she had seen the nurse talking to a soldier, whose face she did not see, in the street, just before she heard her come in.

The evident distress and fright of this girl at the disappearance of the child convinced my parents that she spoke the truth, and had no connection with, nor knowledge of, the abstraction of my lost self. This was more and more evidence of the sinister designs on my person of the guilty absentee. Was the soldier with whom she had been seen talking an accomplice? Had he levanted with her and her precious burden? The uniform was the only clue, and that would probably not remain long unchanged, for who knew what disguise? Where! oh where, could they have gone?

My mother, weeping and fainting by turns, is left to the care of the almost equally tearfully maid, while my father hurries off first to the barracks, where, with the aid of his soldier servant, hunts every nook and cranny of the quarters of both men and officers; the latter are all absent at an entertainment, given in a hall in the town, hired for the purpose, where proceedings are to wind up with a ball, and to which they have invited a number of residents in the neighbourhood. This entertainment and ball my father remembered when he reached the barracks, as he and my mother were to have taken an active part in the festivities, and, but for my mother's illness, would have been there at that moment. He saw now, that as a large contingent of the men, officers' servants, and others, would be taken down to assist in the arrangements, act as door-keepers, etc., how this night, of all others, would be selected as an opportunity for deserting by a clever villain, especially if he had the assistance of a woman who could procure clothes for purposes of disguise, such, for instance, as his own wardrobe might afford. Home again he rushes, frightening my poor mother afresh, as she runs to the door hoping for tidings of her lost darling, to throw open every drawer and cupboard; nothing is missing, but she must have hunted out some old clothes he had forgotten, or thought he had given away, fearing that newer things might be recognised or more easily remembered and described.

Off again, this time to the railway station, where porters and station-master had seen several women with children during the course of the evening, but not knowing his nurse, had not, of course, recognised her; had not noticed any child exceptionally well dressed, or smothered in valuable lace, of which they were no judges.

Many soldiers had likewise been on the platform, but were not particularly noticed as accompanying females carrying handsome boys; nobody in uniform had gone by rail that evening, or the booking-clerk would have

My father and mother both rushed upstairs to the nursery.

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observed the fact. He *must* have been disguised, but inquiry failed to discover whether a man had taken two tickets, and who was accompanied by a woman and child; "woman and child would naturally wait on the platform while tickets were being taken by any man who was with them," the clerk said.

On to the police office, where a full, true, and particular description of the dolinquent nurse and her frail charge are duly taken down in writing by the inspector on duty, with the additional information, "probably accompanied by a soldier of the 15th, in or out of uniform; to be confirmed, and name given, after roll-call to-morrow."

The only information gained at the police-station is that the policeman on the beat will probably know the nurse, by sight at all events, and a man shall be sent to cross-question him forthwith.

Back to the house my father wends his weary way, no news of nurse or child. My mother, by this time, being quite hysterical, my father goes sadly out to fetch the doctor. On his return he finds that cook has just come in, and after considerable fencing with the questions my mother has been able to put to her, has begun to sob violently; evidently she is not entirely ignorant as to the whereabouts of baby, and my father is about to open upon her in "real earnest" as our American cousins say, when a peal is heard from the front-door bell, and enter nurse, baby, cradle, and all! My mother made an effort to reach her lost child, but swooned on the way in her husband's arms. Then began, dear reader, such a scene as is neither frequent in a well-ordered household nor easily described. Everyone lost their heads and tempers simultaneously, tongues worked rapidly, furiously, continuously, but by no means harmoniously.

"Where have you been with my child?" roars my father.

"You had better ask Lieutenant Murray. Indeed it weren't my fault, sir; 'e would 'ave the loan of the blessed baby for his show."

"What! are you drunk or mad? What has Lieutenant Murray to do with my son, and at this time of night?"

"Go and ask him, and don't keep a-shouting at me as if you'd got the toothache!" was the impudent rejoinder, prompted, no doubt, by the insinuation about being drunk and the guilty consciousness of several glasses of negus to which she had been treated.

After this, further attempts to get at the cause of my absence from the parental roof-tree, with my nurse, only elicited impertinence from the latter, till she was peremptorily ordered to leave the house.

Where, think you, dear reader, had I been during all this terrible time of anxiety and temporary insanity on the part of my parents?

Why, I had been making my first appearance on the stage, before a very intelligent and appreciative audience, and received rounds of applause and the most flattering sympathy and attention.

I must now explain that the entertainment to be given by the officers of the 15th on this eventful evening, of which I have before made mention, included an amateur performance of a drawing-room drama, in which Lieutenant Murray was to enact the part of an interesting and fascinating widow, mother of a lovely infant, the posthumous offspring and sole heir of the late Sir Giles de Jasper.

At first it was intended that an empty basinette with a bundle of clothing was to do duty in the scene where the mother was occupied in watching the slumbers of the infant baronet.

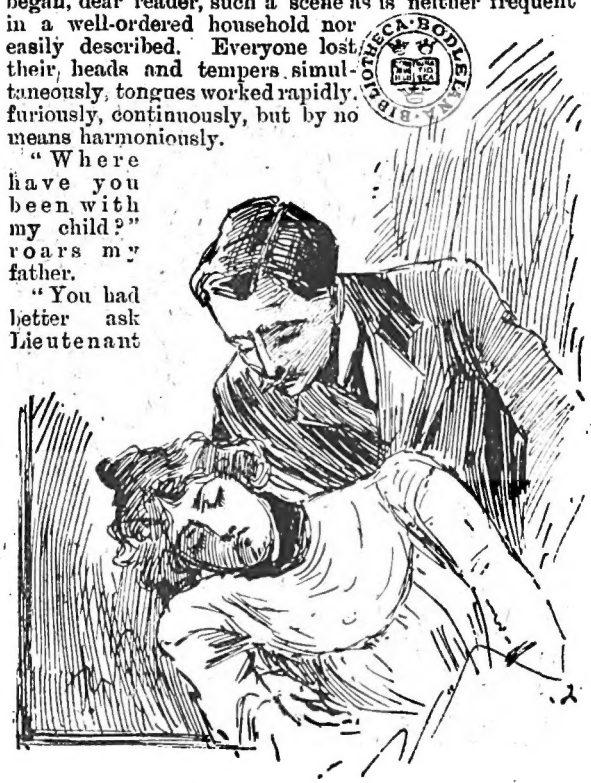
Difficulties arose about the borrowing of the necessary article of furniture for stage use, and a "happy thought" occurring to Lieutenant Murray that my parents owned a baby, and therefore doubtless a cradle of some sort, quite a "knowing wrinkle" suggested itself to his mind, that as the captain and his wife would be absent from home, why not borrow baby as well, and so give additional reality to the scene and secure an extra share of applause to himself. No sooner had this "rare tip" enlightened the gloom of Lieutenant Murray's thoughts, than he immediately set about putting his plan into action. He distinctly remembered coming upon his servant walking out with my nurse Betsy on a fine Sunday evening some time before, so he forthwith summoned this useful functionary and at once began:

"I believe, Wilkins, you know Captain Dolby's nursemaid?"

"Yessir," was the prompt reply.

"Now, I want you to see if you can persuade her to let us have the loan of the baby's cradle for to-night's performance, and as the baby can scarcely sleep without his cradle, she might as well bring him down to the hall with it, and we could bring him on the stage, just for a minute or two, without disturbing him in the least; if he is asleep so much the better. Now, not a word of all this to anyone—anyone, do you understand, Wilkins?—as it is my own idea, and I want to create a bit of a surprise. None of the 15th must know whose child I have got, or it will get to the captain's ears, and then there will be the dickens to pay. I will give you money for a cab, and you must manage to smuggle the nurse and child into and out of the hall again without any one seeing them."

Wilkins tried to enter a mild protest, urging the difficulties of the task, and the danger of serious consequences to the girl if the escapade should ever reach



My mother swooned on the way in her husband's arms.

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Captain Dolby's ears. His master, however, calmed his fears, and talked down all opposition to his pet project. Wilkins then betook himself in due time to meet Betsy according to previous arrangement, as I have before indicated, and at once opened on the confidential scheme intrusted to him by his master. At first Betsy uncompromisingly refused to have act or part in the subtle device, declaring loudly:

"That no child as she had ever heerd on was that wushupped, spoilt, and fussed over as that there Dolby hinfant;" and added, to the sympathetic ears of Wilkins: "I do believe as the Prince o' Wales' nuss was not worrited by the Queen o' Hengland in the way as I have been by Mrs. Dolby. Why, I'm treated as if the young brat was the great Nawab himself and I was one o' his niggers; it ain't fit service for a Christian white woman."

Wilkins' arguments and persuasion would probably have met with little success had not Lieutenant Murray at that very moment passed, quite by accident, of course, on his way to the hall and added the weight of a cheerful and encouraging sentence or two, and the even more tangible weight of a golden argument.

From that moment nurse Betsy was one of the conspirators; she hastened home to array me in my best finery, and slipping quietly out of the house, to avoid being seen or heard by the housemaid, was soon in a cab at the end of the terrace with Private Wilkins, on her way to the "halls of dazzling light." By the time we had arrived at our destination I had resumed my rudely disturbed dreams, and was quietly taken to a small back room to await the call boy, and where nurse beguiled her time with the consumption of negus, which Lieutenant Murray sent by Wilkins for her special refreshment, rightly judging that if strong and sweet it would act as a powerful antidote to any qualms of conscience or fears of ulterior consequences.

She was soon as merry as a cricket, and had begun to take a real interest in the success of the evening's exploit.

At length the scene arrived, where the curtain was to rise disclosing Lieutenant Murray as the charming widow, hanging over the cradle containing the young *débutant* in the part of sleeping innocence.

Nurse was carefully kept in the background as a precaution against my identity being discovered, so Wilkins deposited me in my cradle, very gingerly, on the stage in a position where I should be in view, but protected as much as possible from draughts.

When the footlights were turned on and the curtain rose, I must have felt that the situation was not one in which I could, with due credit to myself and civility to the attentive audience, remain silent, so I began to crow lustily, which had the effect of bringing down the house with a torrent of applause, and likewise of much discomposing the expression suitable to my stage mother in her widowed condition.

She began to rock the cradle violently, as the applause had caused an ominous gloom to overspread my hitherto beaming countenance. The rocking and the frantic applause which followed this very natural effort of the mother to soothe her infant treasure immediately caused the gathering clouds to dissolve themselves in a shower, or rather a downpour of portentous magnitude. I further resented, with stentorian voice and convulsive kicks, the attempt on the part of Lieutenant Murray to lift me, which he did, like all young men, as if I had a tendency to come to pieces on being handled. This complete taking possession of the house by myself resulted in

Betsy hastened to array me in my best finery.

Wilkins being obliged to carry me to the little back room, where my nurse soon silenced and then calmed me to sleep with the aid of another dose of the invaluable soothing syrup. My appearance on the stage, and my performance there, though amusing enough features in themselves, robbed the piece of all interest, and the audience appearing restless, it was decided to curtail this part of the entertainment, and so dancing was commenced sooner than had been intended.

Now that I was fast asleep again, the nurse slipped out and watched the dancing from a side door for several hours, which accounted for her late return home. The consequences of her share in the transaction are already known to the reader, nor could all the pleading of Lieutenant Murray induce my mother to intrust again my precious little carcass to the care of "that thief of a woman," as she insisted on calling the nurse. Lieutenant Murray, although heavily punished by the failure of the play, and the fiasco and ridicule which resulted from his "happy thought," did not escape my mother's scathing accusation of lack of every feeling of humanity supposed to distinguish the conduct of civilized races. I question if she has ever quite forgiven him his share in the suffering and fright my temporary abduction caused, although he has since married her sister and proved himself an excellent husband and fond parent. My father could never be brought to see any humorous side to a stupid freak which had caused so much pain and anxiety. It will be seen from the foregoing narrative that "my first appearance on any stage," though creating a great sensation in more ways than one, was far from a success.

J. D. HUTCHESON.

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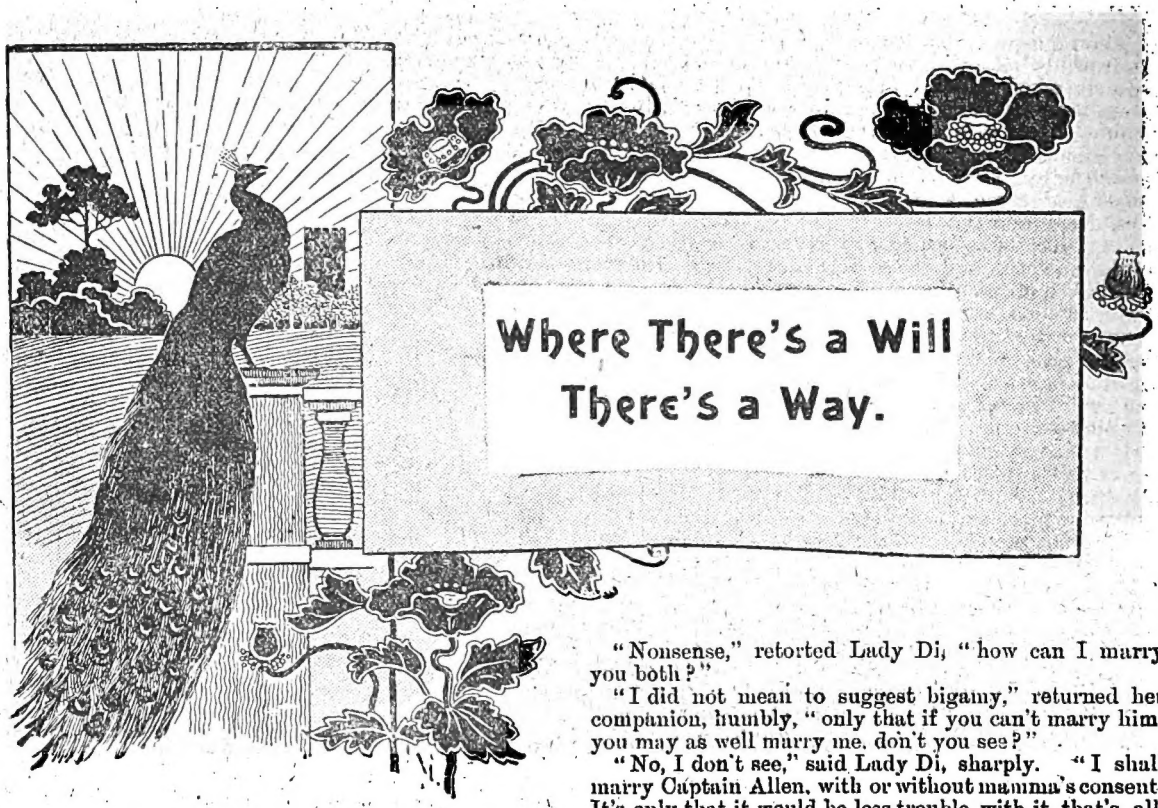

Where There's a Will There's a Way.

LADY DI CRAMPTON was giving her parents an immense amount of trouble and anxiety in more ways than one. To begin with, it was her third season, and she had not yet taken upon herself the bonds of matrimony, nor even the shackles of a satisfactory engagement. In addition to this, Di's mother had every reason to fear that her daughter had given her heart to a very charming but hopelessly impecunious young officer.

The Cramptons, like many other folk, were hampered by the lack of sufficient gold to carry on their style of living, and therefore had set their hearts on their daughter making a rich marriage, thus saving them from utter extinction in the present, and promising a comfortable security in the future. Now Di by no means lacked admirers, nor suitors for her hand.

Only one short week ago, she had refused a rich pork manufacturer, who with a noble generosity had laid his pigs and their profits at her feet. Of this proposal she had not dared to tell her parents, even begging her would-be lover to continue his visits as frequently as heretofore.

"Because," she told him naïvely, "they would be so angry if they knew that I had refused you."

At which the poor young man hardly knew whether to be offended or not, only that it was next to impossible to be long angry with Lady Di, so he wisely made up his mind to be friends, if he could be nothing nearer, finding out in the course of a few confidential chats upon whom she had set her wayward affections.

"He's so poor," she told him woefully, "They will never allow it."

"Poor little girl," he said tenderly, "it's hard lines. But there is always me to fall back upon you know."

"Nonsense," retorted Lady Di, "how can I marry you both?"

"I did not mean to suggest bigamy," returned her companion, humbly, "only that if you can't marry him, you may as well marry me, don't you see?"

"No, I don't see," said Lady Di, sharply. "I shall marry Captain Allen, with or without mamma's consent. It's only that it would be less trouble with it, that's all. Mr. Armytage, do you really care for me, as much as you tell me?"

"Of course I do," answered the young man earnestly, and the light that sprang from his honest blue eyes convinced Di of the truth of his words.

She placed her hand gently on his arm.

"Then I shall rely on you to help me if necessary," she said, getting up in answer to her mother's call to go and greet some visitors.

The season was drawing to a close.

Both Lady Di and her mother were looking pale and worn, the one with the constant anxiety to press upon her daughter the necessity of a rich marriage, the other from the continual resistance that she had to bring into force.

Just now it was a cotton manufacturer who had come forward with a request for Lady Di's hand, and unfortunately had spoken to her parents on the subject first, so Di had no chance of disposing of him as she had of the pig-owner.

Unluckily, too, he had with great skill discovered the scarcity of the gold coin, making a generous offer to advance the needful, and clear all deficits, should he be fortunate enough to win the young lady's hand. This placed Di very awkwardly, but it did not shake her decision to marry no one but the man she loved.

It merely helped her to make up her mind that what had to be done, had best be done quickly. Captain Allen naturally being of the same opinion, and Di being a young woman of resource, they formed a plan between them, and set about to put it into action as soon as they conveniently could.

So one evening, at a reception at her mother's house, Di electrified Mr. Armytage, by saying suddenly:

"I have promised to marry Captain Allen in a week's

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time. You must help me as you promised," passing on in the crowd before the astonished young man had time to reply.

Later on he had a few moments' talk with her.

"You will help me, Mr. Armytage?" she said.

"My dear Lady Di, I don't see how it can be done," returned the young man, almost gasping in his surprise. "A week is so short a time."

"Quite long enough," returned Di, "for our purpose. Come along, and get me an ice or something, and I will tell you all about it."

For a few minutes there was a low-voiced conversation carried on in a corner, much to the delight of Di's mamma.

Perhaps the pork man had still a chance, she thought.

Suddenly Di's companion broke into a hearty laugh.

"Capital—splendid," he exclaimed. "My sister will be only too charmed," and rising from his seat, he made his way across to Lady Crampton to bid her good-night.

* * * * *

It was a week later. The Cramptons' house was ablaze with lights. Through the down-drawn blinds could be seen the shadows of busy footmen and maids moving to and fro. The hostess and her daughter stood greeting their guests at the top of the staircase.

Di looked brilliantly handsome in her plain satin gown, only a single string of pearls encircling her slender throat. Her dress was perfect in every detail bar one. It was a curious fact that not once during the whole evening did anyone catch a glimpse of even the tip of a shoe peeping beneath the gown.

Perhaps the long dresses of the day partly accounted for it, but even in that case, when a lady has a remarkably pretty foot, she generally manages to let it appear somehow. But Di to-night had a reason for hiding her usually smartly-shod understandings. She had "patent" leather boots on.

A couple of hours passed, and Lady Crampton's guests began to depart. No one noticed that a certain satin-clad figure had disappeared.

"Good-bye, goodbye; so delighted to have seen you." "Delightful evening," and so on were the remarks made, as they thronged down the staircase.

"Where is Di? Oh, downstairs I expect," replied Lady Crampton, as some friend inquired for her. "You are sure to find her there. Goodbye."

All was confusion in the hall, as well as outside, for everyone was waiting for their cab or carriage. In the midst of it, a slim figure in a long ulster and squashy felt hat slipped by from somewhere, springing on to the empty box of a smart-looking hansom cab.

I do not fancy anyone had time to notice what a very smart pair of boots the young cabman wore, for a lady and gentleman umped in almost before he had gathered up the reins, and with a plunge the spirited little mare went off at a quick trot.

"All right there?" questioned a soft voice through the trap door.

"All right," answered Armytage and his sister, and in less than twenty minutes they drew up at the kerb, got out of the cab, and prepared to help the driver from his elevated position.

But someone was before them.

Jack Allen had the slight figure folded tight in his arms, and perhaps it may be forgiven if poor Armytage felt a pang as he mounted his seat and drove slowly round to his own stables.

The next morning, as Lady Crampton was sitting up in bed, eating her breakfast, her maid brought her the following letter:

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I hope my maid gave you my message last night. It was quite true. I *had* a headache, and I wished to save you all anxiety should you miss me. By the time you get this I shall be Mrs. Jack Allen, as we are to be married at eight o'clock to-morrow, or rather this morning. I am staying the night with Mr. Armytage's sister, who has been most kind.

I am sorry to disappoint you, and hope one day you will forgive, Your affectionate daughter, DI.

GRACE COOMBE.

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THE LION'S WARS

The War with the Ghurkas, the Pindaris and the Last Mahratta War.

(1813-1817.)

ALTHOUGH the year 1813 found our vast Empire in India still undergoing the process of consolidation, the great native feudatory powers were beginning slowly to perceive that a continuance of our rule insured not only the independence, but the prosperity of their respective countries.

Law and order, however, being utterly distasteful to the mountain tribes, who lived by warfare, their subjection became necessary for the pacification of India.

In 1813 the Ghurkas of Nepal were peremptorily called upon to evacuate some lands—of which we were the Suzerain power—they had annexed. On their retirement their places were filled by the police. But the Ghurkas had only retreated to organise their forces, and shortly after, again took possession of the occupied districts, driving out the police.

War was then declared, and Nepal invaded at several points. General Ochterlony with 6,000 native troops was ordered to the hill country.

General Gillespie with 3,500 troops, 1,000 of whom were British, was to push from Meerut, and skirting the mountains to keep in touch with the first column. General Wood was to invade from the east with 3,000 natives and 1,000 British, whilst another force of 3,000 under Major Larter, was to support our ally the Raja of Sikkim against attacks from the Ghurkas.

A few insignificant successes won by General Ochterlony were followed by a grave disaster. General Gillespie, finding his march obstructed by a hill fort called Kalanga, manned by a mere handful of the enemy, tried to capture it and failed. In two assaults we lost over 500 men and General Gillespie was killed.

The force then waited for their artillery. After a breach had been made in the walls the order was given not to load the muskets but to carry the fort by the bayonet alone. This led to another disaster. When we got inside we found our progress checked by the *débris*. Before we could retire the enemy opened fire killing a great number.

Wiser counsels then prevailed, and we did what we ought to have done at first. The job was handed over to the artillerymen, who quickly laid the fort in ruins. Gillespie's force then attempted to join Ochterlony and passing another fort on the road called Jaitak, again tempted fortune, only to be repulsed with heavy loss. But these were not the only reverses we sustained.

General Wood, after being checked in an attempt to carry a stockade by storm, was induced to believe that the enemy was in such strong force as to render it hazardous for him to advance further.

General Marley's plans, too, were deranged in consequence of two detached posts of 500 men each he had left behind without supports being cut to pieces.

Then Amir Khan, the Pathan Chief, assembled his warriors. Lahore too, began to swarm with the soldiers of the great Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh.

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The Pindaris, too, a central India tribe of robbers, whose plundering proclivities had been kept in check, threatened hostilities, and Amir Khan, who was only twelve marches from Delhi, was said to have in readiness a force of 30,000 sturdy fighters and 125 guns.

But the Government never quailed. Our statesmen faced the situation, bad as it was, with unshrinking firmness. Reinforcements were sent up without stint, and orders given for an immediate advance on Nepal. The men rejoiced, for they were burning to avenge their defeats, but the officers hung back. They feared the hills.

Then at the very moment when our fortunes seemed at their darkest, the clouds suddenly cleared. The Pindaris instead of fighting us began fighting amongst themselves.

A quarrel broke out between the Amir Kabul and Ranjit Singh, whilst Scindia relinquished his design because his generals could not agree on a plan of campaign.

The danger of an Anti-British combination for a time averted, the war was renewed. A feint was made against the western powers. The Nepalese province of Kumaun drew off so many Ghurkas that Ochterlony, although opposed by the ablest of the Ghurka chiefs, Amir Singh Kapa, was able to capture the fort Nalagarh. He then boldly entered the mountains and stormed Rangari, another fort built on the top of a mountain 4,600 feet above the sea.

The Ghurkas with their long heavy knives were formidable opponents. At the outset of the war they were able, owing to their daring and extraordinary agility, to creep under our bayonets, and once inside the ranks the deadly knife was plied without mercy.

But the British soldier is nothing if not adaptable. He is willing to learn and always profits by experience. As soon as our men had learnt how to stop the wild rushes of their agile little foes, they drove them from point to point.

Whilst Scindia, having healed the differences between his generals, was conspiring again, our brave fellows were carrying everything before them. All the Ghurka villages, Ryla, Deonthal and Malaur, fell in quick succession. The fall of Malaur so disheartened the Nepalese that they sued for peace.

We took over a big slice of hill country, presented the Raja of Sikkim with a large district, and compelled the Nepalese to receive a British resident at Khatmandu. It was from the Ghurkas that we obtained possession of those southern slopes of the Himalayas which provide the civil and military services with the highland resorts of Simla, Landaur and Naini Tal.

The Nepalese treaty signed, we were free to deal with the Mahrattas, but the Governor General, Lord Hastings, deemed it better to crush the Pindaris first before settling scores with the Mahrattas. The Pindaris were robbers pure and simple. Strangers in the land to this extent that they were not connected with other races either by blood or religion, they were especially dangerous on account of the welcome they afforded all the outlaws and criminals of India.

Such ancestry as they had was to be found in the dregs of the Mogul Empire. Their headquarters were at Malwa, the richest part of central India, and though they gained a livelihood by plunder they committed their depredations on such a large scale that their principal chief, Amir Khan, boasted a well-equipped army supported by a powerful artillery.

The force they were able to put in the field when they became aware of our intentions so rapidly increased that our Government sent against them the largest army ever seen in India. It comprised 81,000 infantry, 10,000 cavalry, and 23,000 irregular troops. This large force so over-awed Scindia, who had been secretly promising to come to the aid of the Pindaris as soon as hostilities commenced, that when the Governor General, the Marquis of Hastings, who headed the army, after listening unmoved to the protestations of loyalty, suddenly produced a treaty and called on him to sign it, he dared not refuse.

To be compelled to furnish a contingent for the subjection of the very people he had sworn to support was a bitter pill. He told his officers before they started that they might desert to the enemy if they chose. But we had anticipated this by placing the Mahratta contingent under the command of British officers.

Dismayed by this desertion, Amir Khan at once submitted, offering to disband his freebooters if the British would allow him to retain the land he held from the Prince Holkar.

We agreed to these conditions, gave him five lakhs of rupees for his artillery, and as the security for the disbanding of his robbers took his son and heir as hostage.

But as this treaty only concerned Amir Khan himself, we attacked the other chiefs, stormed their camps, and broke up their organisation. We also forced Scindia to give up a noted chief, Wazil Muhammad, who had fled to Gwalior, and we totally defeated another chieftain, Chitu.

Deserted by his followers, this Chitu, after wandering about the country for twelve months, was killed when nearly dead with hunger by a tiger. The Pindari war was hardly concluded, when we found ourselves again embroiled with the Mahratta Princes.

Had these potentates been wise, they would have waited till the enormous army we had collected had been disbanded, but when we proceeded to insist on the Peshwa (who had never forgiven us for forcing him to sign, in 1802, the treaty of Bassien) signing a new treaty at Poona, which relieved the Gaikwar of Baroda from his control, besides forcing him to refer all disputes with other princes to our arbitration, he refused.

Under pretence of assisting us against the Pindaris he had largely increased his army. Now he proceeded to provision it. Suspecting his purpose, the British resident, Mr. Elphinstone, sent to Bombay for reinforcements and retired to Kirki. Here he was attacked without warning by an army of 18,000 men under Bappo Gokla, the Peshwa's general.

Our force under Colonel Burr only numbered 2,800 men, but they were quite undismayed when the Mahratta force, anticipating an easy victory, rushed on their thin red line which, after recovering from the charge, charged back in return with such vigour that the Mahrattas were sent flying in all directions.

This defeat so crushed the haughty Peshwa that when Colonel Smith, with a strong division of the army Lord Hastings had collected for the subjugation of the Pindaris, appeared off Poona, he found the Prince had left his capital during the night. Some of the soldiers laid down their arms, but a few fiery regiments offered a stout resistance. Those that preferred fighting to surrendering were annihilated. In those days war was war.

When we entered the capital we found eighteen cannon and a large quantity of stores. This defeat spread with lightning rapidity to all parts of India completely restoring our prestige.

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Drawn by] [C. Lawson Wood.

The Sepoys rushed valiantly forward, stormed the trenches, and drove the Mahrattas down the hill.

The Peshwa's kinsman, the Mahratta Raja, instead of taking warning by what had happened, also defied the British. He had succeeded to his position on the death of the late Raja, whom he had poisoned, and he believed that a knowledge of this fact had made us resolve to depose him on the first opportunity.

The insolent manner in which he treated Mr. Jenkins, the Resident, caused that gentleman to fly to Sitabakli Hill in the centre of the city. He had with him two battalions of Sepoy infantry and some detachments of infantry and cavalry amounting altogether to 1,400 men.

The Englishman was not a moment too soon, for the last soldier had scarcely mounted Sitabakli Hill when the Raja, his army comprising 12,000 horse and 8,000 infantry, with 36 guns, appeared.

Mr. Jenkins having refused to capitulate a heavy fire was opened. The British, who were placed at the most vulnerable part of the hill, lost a good many men whilst the bombardment lasted; indeed, their losses were much more severe than the enemy supposed, for presently changing their tactics the bombardment was stayed to permit of the hill being stormed.

Time after time did the Mahrattas reach the crest of the hill only to be hurled back with tremendous loss. Instead of resting when night came the besieged employed the time in making fresh cartridges and intrenchments. Picks and shovels not being available the Sepoys were ordered to creep stealthily into the town and bring away anything likely to prove useful.

The following morning found the garrison stationed behind the most remarkable defences ever seen on a field of battle. Intrenchments composed of sacks of flour and grain, water-barrels, planks, old doors and all sorts of odds and ends affording cover.

At daybreak the attack was renewed with extraordinary fierceness. During the afternoon a tumbrel burst, causing such commotion amongst the Sepoys that the Mahrattas dashed up the hill, stormed the improvised intrenchments, drove out the Sepoys, and being reinforced, opened a heavy fire on our men who were stationed on another spur of the hill.

Our position was now more dangerous than ever. Menaced by the Mahrattas on the hill, and by the swarms encircling the hill on the other side, our men began to fall rapidly. Again the Mahratta Prince summoned us to surrender, and again we refused, although the cartridges made during the night were nearly all gone, and the provisions were running out.

What was to be done? Believing that destruction was only to be averted by some desperate action, Captain Fitzgerald asked permission to charge. It was refused. Later in the day the application was repeated.

"Tell Captain Fitzgerald," said Colonel Smith, "that he charges the enemy at his peril."

"At my peril be it," replied the dauntless Irishman.

Gathering his troopers around him, these splendid fellows cantered down the hill and then dashed headlong at the foe.

"Mad," said Smith, when he heard the news.

But the captain so far from being mad was extremely artful.

Two of the enemy's guns had wrought great havoc in our ranks and he meant to have them. Balaclava pales into insignificance before Fitzgerald's heroic ride.

A handful of men beset on all sides by thousands of foes thirsting for their blood, not only cut their way to where the guns were, but despite all the efforts of the Mahrattas, who at that time were the fiercest fighters in India, actually brought them back and got them to the top of the hill.

The Sepoys who witnessed this daring feat grew so excited, that when a tumbrel exploded amongst the Mahrattas a little later, they rushed valiantly forward, and drove the Mahrattas down the hill.

Resolved not to be outdone, the rest of this wonderful little army declared that the time had arrived for them to do something. Even Colonel Smith was infected by the general enthusiasm.

Regardless of the danger to which they would be exposed by giving up the hill, they charged right down into the serried masses clustering round the base, and although they had no cartridges, the bayonet was plied with such effect that the foe was completely routed.

With characteristic duplicity, the Mahratta Prince disowned all knowledge of the treacherous treatment of the British envoy, but when General Doveton arrived with large reinforcements the Prince was quickly made to understand that he must not only surrender but disband his army. He agreed to surrender, but refusing to disband both sides prepared for another fight.

So far our policy had been crowned with success. Two of the formidable Mahratta Princes had been deposed and only one remained.

Jeswart Holkar, Prince of Indore, who in 1805 was defeated by Lord Lake, died insane, leaving a favourite concubine, Talsi Bai, to rule the country during the minority of his son Mulkar Rao.

As soon as the Mahrattas heard that the British were coming, they abducted the infant Prince, killed Talsi Bai, and taking up a strong position on the banks of the Sipra, at Maidpur, which commanded the only ford for miles, they awaited the approach of Sir John Malcolm and the British.

The Mahrattas knew the daring of the British soldier but they never dreamt that they would risk forcing a passage in the face of seventy pieces of artillery.

The surprise of the artillerymen when one man dashed into the stream was so great as to completely paralyse their aim. To minimise our losses we had extended our lines. Consequently when we closed up to attack the two wings of the Mahrattas closed in too. Cheered by the depth of their columns they fought marvellously well.

Time after time we charged into their ranks killing hundreds. But as they showed no signs of yielding, Sir John Malcolm sent a body of British infantry to their rear. Even then the brave Mahrattas faced about refusing to fly. When the ever-contracting iron circle we had thrown around them crushed out the resistance, we charged into the mass with the bayonet.

The shades of evening were drawing in when the Mahrattas, despairing of victory, burst through the cordon and took to flight.

We lost 778 killed and wounded. The Mahrattas over 4,000. The treaty of Mandassar concluded in 1818 reduced the Princes of the reigning house to the feudatory position the other Mahratta Princes had accepted. The chief of the Gwalior Mahrattas made one more effort to recover the independence of his state before finally tendering his allegiance to the British Crown. In 1843 Sir Hugh Gough, at the head of a small force, so completely routed 18,000 Mahrattas at the battle of Maharipore that, fully convinced of our superiority, the Mahrattas have ever since been as loyal as any of the other feudatory states of India.

(*Next week:* **The Two Great Burmese Wars of 1823-6 and 1854-6.**)

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PHILADELPHIA'S FOLLY.

PHILADELPHIA DACRE was a young woman with just that amount of self-assertiveness that goes to make the capable maiden of to-day.

That she was alone in the world was rather in favour of this peculiarity than otherwise, although it did not render her in any way hard or unsympathetic.

In the neighbourhood where she lived (artistic Chelsea), she contrived to find that indefinite something which almost invariably spells "home." A little flat consisting of a studio, and one other tiny room, in the quiet road that links riverside Chelsea with the more aristocratic South Kensington, had been her bread-winning and domestic refuge ever since the death of her father, her last surviving relative, four years before.

Twenty-three, and possessing a creditable reputation with the "West End" dealer as a reliable producer of pretty little pictures of a certain phase of metropolitan child life, she bid fair, by dint of hard work, and persistent study, to reach in time, if not the top of the tree, at least a modest perching-place amongst the mid-way branches.

The only child of a man of more than average talent as a landscape painter, whom years of continually increasing ill-health had alone served to keep him from realising his ambition, Philadelphia had inherited, in no small measure, her dead father's artistic gift.

Her Christian name, a peculiar one, had originated in the fact of her having been born in the "City of Brotherly Love," U. S., during a long visit of her parents to that place, where lived Mrs. Dacre's relatives, members of an old Pennsylvanian family.

It was owing, more especially, to mother and daughter having both first seen the light in the "Quaker City" that the former called her baby after their mutual birthplace, and certainly the quaintness of the name harmonised more than fairly well with the unconventional oddness of the girl.

Now, in most things Philadelphia was matter-of-fact to a fault, but in one little corner of her heart she had hidden away and cherished a fancy, a sunny dream that made her loneliness no loneliness at all. Her eyes saw, her ears heard things that, shadows though they were deeply contented her and made life endurable, and even worth the living.

This imaginative indulgence had a somewhat strange origin. She had remained long enough in the city of her birth to become acquainted with a boy of her own age; a friend and neighbour of the Philadelphia Dacres. Upon her quitting America for England, both were eleven or thereabouts. Having played together, and made common cause against domestic authority, a mutual feeling of friendship had established itself between them, and although young Olaf Schuster speedily forgot his companion, she, on her part, was faithful, even too worshipping point.

Young Schuster came of the old Pennsylvania Dutch stock, but, truth to say, was but a degenerate specimen of the race. As a boy he had been overbearing, mean, sly, but woman, be she little or big, is ever sadly inconsistent, and Philadelphia, patient, forgiving, blind to all shortcomings, was no better than the majority of her sisters, and grovelled in the dust before the young tyrant.

Thus it was now that in the solitude of her little domain, she weaved a romance, plot, persons, *denoument*, all so ideally imagined and elaborated, that no one, save the fair author, could possibly have reached to the height necessary for complete belief and understanding.

It is extraordinary what mere imagination will do for some people; with Philadelphia it had the effect of crowning, with a by no means limited halo, a young man absolutely non-angelic, and causing herself to regard this undoubtedly mythical divinity with a love altogether out of proportion to the object upon which it was lavished.

It was thirteen years or more since she had seen Olaf Schuster, and, having had no communication of any kind with him, never having even seen his pictured presentment, it was logically impossible that she could form a just conception of his person or character.

But, as I started out by saying, Philadelphia was no ordinary girl, and being what she was, and because, perhaps, of her isolated position and her surroundings, she had, unwittingly almost, given way to the temptation of creating an ideal, which, though utterly unlike the real, satisfied her heart-craving for something upon which to expend the mother-instinct of her nature; the love which would claim expression, be the object selected never so unsuitable or unworthy.

In Gains orough Studios, where she lived, a certain Gerald Laing, artist, Bohemian, and occasional contributor to journals devoted to the interests of his profession, had his painting-room, and bachelor quarters.

In spite, however, of his vagabond mode of life, he

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was a thoroughly good fellow, a hard worker, and a tolerably well-known painter of military subjects.

For long he had been in the habit of occasionally seeing Philadelphia flitting up and down the dim, bare staircase, although not knowing exactly who she was.

He admired her from the outset, not so much for her trim, natty little figure, nor, indeed, because she was fair to look upon, but for the one mysterious thing which is always so evident to the genuine worshipper of the idol, and which no other than the veritably right person is permitted to see.

One particular year Philadelphia had sent in to the Academy a picture which (wonderful for her) pleased herself, but which failed to evoke responsive sentiments in the hearts of a hard and unsympathetic Hanging Committee.

It was a larger canvas than she ordinarily ventured upon, and the day she fetched it away from Burlington House, she felt so tired and depressed that its weight seemed to her to be increased sevenfold as she toiled with it from the cab and up the stairway to her rooms.

It chanced that as she was going up, Gerald Laing was coming down. Her distress was so evident, that in a moment he had raised his hat, and had proffered his services in assisting her to carry the "rejected" up to the door of No. 17.

Philadelphia looked at him a second, keenly, as if "weighing-up" the offerer of aid.

Then she said, very cordially, and with just the suspicion of a demure little smile:

"Thanks, very much! If you will be so kind. Mr. Gerald Laing, isn't it? My name is——"

"Miss Dacre—Miss Philadelphia Dacre, isn't it?" he laughingly interrupted her.

"Quite correct, Mr. Laing, I am that unfortunate individual. It is a little bit strange, you know, that you and I should have lived on the same floor for more than two years, and yet never exchanged the ordinary greetings of near neighbours until this moment."

He said that it was; and also, it is to be feared, was unduly slow in "portering" the luckless picture to its inceptive source.

Pre-occupied as was Philadelphia she yet recognised and appreciated the young artist's favourable personality, gentle courtesy, and, (as it would be called to-day by the advanced school), his old-fashioned attention to the *convenances*.

Dismissing her self-appointed helper with a brief expression of thanks, emphasized with a nod and a smile, and safely landed in her own preserves, Philadelphia's proceedings were, to say the least, strangely inconsequent.

Before even taking off her hat and jacket, or making the slightest preparation for a meal, she unearthed from the bottom of a large trunk, a small, very small cash-box.

Sitting down in her basket arm-chair, with the box upon her knees, she opened it and began with nervous haste to count up the contents. It represented her savings for the past two or three years. A pitifully small heap of gold and silver, not more perhaps than forty p unds in all.

"I think it's enough. I do think it's enough," she said, half-aloud, and looking wistfully at the coins as they lay, a metallic medley, in her lap. "I can travel second cabin, and can be very careful about incidental expenses, and odds and ends. I've plenty of clothes, and when I arrive in Philadelphia, I shall be all right, for I can go to Aunt Judith's at once. Yes, I think it's enough, and—I'll chance it."

What was in her mind to do?

Just this—which ninety-nine out of a hundred English girls would vote hare-brained, not respectable unmaidenly.

She was going to cross the Atlantic, alone, unprotected, to see for herself if Olaf Schuster, her ideal, her hero, her dream-love, was ready to play his part in the drama she had created.

Wild-goose chase! fools errand! nay, she would none of it. Did not her whole soul respond ecstatically to Olaf's name?

She would go, whatever the risk, whatever the misunderstanding of motive her proceeding might excite in the minds of others. Other people's opinions troubled her but little, and, as her circle of acquaintance was comparatively small, she anticipated nothing of an unpleasant nature from that quarter.

Had such a thing been at all likely, it would not have deterred her, and so, her purpose being now fixed and unalterable, she dismissed from her mind any probable or possible objections.

Meanwhile, Gerald Laing had to confess to himself that he was conquered, that his heart had gone out, once and for ever, to the little lady of the "picture." The self-confession did not by any means distress him; rather did it result in pr found self-gratulation, and in an abandonment to a delicious and future-building train of thought.

Now and then, during the fortnight following his introductory meeting with her, he and Philadelphia ran up against one another; but the enthusiasm was all upon one side. He thought of no one, and nothing else but her; she, on the other hand, was so all-absorbed in her romantic fancy that poor Gerald and his newborn pass on, were counted as of no value and ignored accordingly. She easily detected the effect her mere presence had upon him, and, snailwise, immediately withdrew into her shell.

Still he hoped that a patient persistence would reap its reward; and he planned out a campaign, which he imagined must, by reason of its very boldness, both of conception and execution, force the other side to capitulate.

He indulged in this pleasant dream right up to a certain morning, when, without warning, his "Castle of Cards" came clattering down about his ears in ruinous fashion.

The old woman, who waited on the residential inmates of the Gainsborough Studios, a garrulous old soul, but honest withal, acquainted him upon bringing up his breakfast, and with many a beck and finger punctuation, that Miss Dacre had left early that morning, with a cab-load of baggage, for Liverpool Street, and that her boxes, were labelled "Passenger to New York."

Mrs. Filliboy will not soon forget the way in which Gerald Laing received the news.

Starting up, rocket-quick, out of his chair, and walking excitedly up and down the room for five minutes, he stopped abruptly in front of the old gossip.

"Where's she gone? Only an hour ago? Look here, Mrs. Filliboy, run up, like a good soul! and see if you can't find any scrap of paper lying about with an American address upon it. Never mind my breakfast, woman! Go! and I'll give you—give you—anything, if you only find something!"

"Lor bless you, Mr. Laing! don't frighten a body so: why, I can't read writin', sir, and besides, I shouldn't like to use my key, seeing as Miss Dacre has locked

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up her place for four solid months, so she said, and me only to go in once a week to clean up a bit."

Nothing was found, and Gerald was at his wit's end to account for this sudden and inexplicable action of Philadelphia's.

Then a bright thought struck him.

It so happened that just about this time he was taking a brief and well-earned rest after a long spell of special work, the painting of a series of large military frescoes in the country house of a retired army-officer of high rank.

This commission had put a large sum of ready money in his pocket, and, determined several weeks before to take a holiday upon the completion of his task, he now decided that he would follow his lady-love across the Western Ocean, trusting to the chapter of accidents, and a due exercise of mother-wit in the way of inquiry, to discover a clue to her whereabouts.

That she might possibly resent such an energetic style of wooing was far from occurring to him, while any idea as to the pre-engagement of her affections never even entered into his head.

Anyway he made up his mind there and then to go, and at once, and forty-eight hours later found him on board the White Star liner *Barbaric* steaming merrily down the Mersey towards the sea.

Now that he had some definite object in view, and that he was fairly launched on his quest, he was to a certain extent happy. He hated to think of Philadelphia as making this long journey alone and without adequate protection.

He of course was altogether unaware that she possessed relatives or friends in America, and only thought how he might be a shield between her and the dangers his too anxious mind conjured up as strewing her path.

* * * * *

The *Barbaric* duly arrived at New York and discharged her passengers at the Company's Pier.

Gerald, intent only upon getting ashore as quickly as possible, in order that he might commence his search without delay, shouldered his portmanteau, and impulsively hurried down the gangway.

A perfect stranger to America and its ways, he is jostled hither and thither in his efforts to find an exit into the streets, and a conveyance to some hotel.

He is just upon the point of addressing an official, when his eyes encountered a grey-cloaked little figure, recognisable to him amid ten thousand.

Dropping his portmanteau, and shouting to a coloured boy to stand by it, he elbows his way to where the girl stands.

"Miss Dacre!"

"Mr. Laing!"

"Of course you're surprised!—you couldn't be otherwise. But—er—business—er—sudden and important business—"

She looked him through and through with those keen, grey eyes of hers; but he flinched never a whit, although his heart beat nineteen to the dozen.

"Yes," he continued, a trifle more coherently, and also, it must be confessed, not a little mendaciously, "I wanted a holiday, and thought a month's run through the States would be a splendid experience."

"Mr. Laing," said Philadelphia, knitting her brows, and regarding the big, good-looking criminal with almost legal severity, "you're not speaking the truth. I'm sure you're not! Now, are you?"

"Well—you see—I—er—thought—I mean I—er—imagined that—there! I can't brazen it out, Miss Dacre—Philadelphia. I was so fearful for you, so upset at the idea of your being exposed to insult or annoyance—danger even—that I couldn't help coming after you to—well—offer my services again."

By this time they had drifted away from the press, and were standing in a comparatively quiet corner.

She glanced up at him. His honest eyes, with an eager, pleading look in them, met hers.

"What," she said, "if I decline them?"

"In that case I could have no more to say."

"But you must admit that it is all very presumptuous on your part. You won't deny that."

"I'll admit anything and everything, and confess myself the great culprit you deem me, if you will only——"

"Well?"

"Have mercy upon me—treat me as a first offender, and—give me another chance."

The form of her answer to this appeal is immaterial, inasmuch as the effect was satisfactory. That much, at least, may be placed upon record, without hurting anybody.

Then she told him, with many a word of self-accusation for her unreasonable folly, the whole story, and how it was that she was there that day, preparing to embark for home.

It seems that her disillusionment was so complete as it was commensurate with her arrival in Philadelphia.

Mrs. Judith Dacre, astonished, naturally, at so unexpected a visit from her niece, had things to say, before even a question was asked, of Olaf Schuster, that, once and for ever, awoke the girl from her silly dream.

It is unnecessary to go into details, sufficient that the crooked nature of the boy had developed, in manhood, into absolute evil. An outcast from family and friends, he lived but to be a disreputable burden upon those who should have been able to look to him for comfort and affection in the evening of their days.

This being so, Philadelphia determined at once to return to England and her duties.

Her meeting with Gerald probably gave the right turn to her thoughts at the right moment, and prevented her from indulging in that morbid self-abasement which such a nature as hers would undoubtedly have given way to.

* * * * *

The *Gallic* is warping slowly into dock.

It is nine p.m., and the lights of Liverpool twinkle a welcome to the home-coming travellers.

In the crowd, waiting the shipping of the gangway, is a young couple, she with her hand upon his arm, in all the pride and trustfulness of love.

"At last!" he says, bending down from his "six feet, one," to whisper in his little companion's ear. "You'll keep to your word as to the day?"

"What day?"

"The wedding-day."

"Oh! I'd forgotten all about it!" and she laughed roguishly.

"Forgotten it?"

"Well, if I had, you would soon have made good my memory."

"Then, my services are still in request."

"I suppose so."

And Philadelphia really meant it.

Ralph Enderby.

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FITTING FACE COMPETITION.

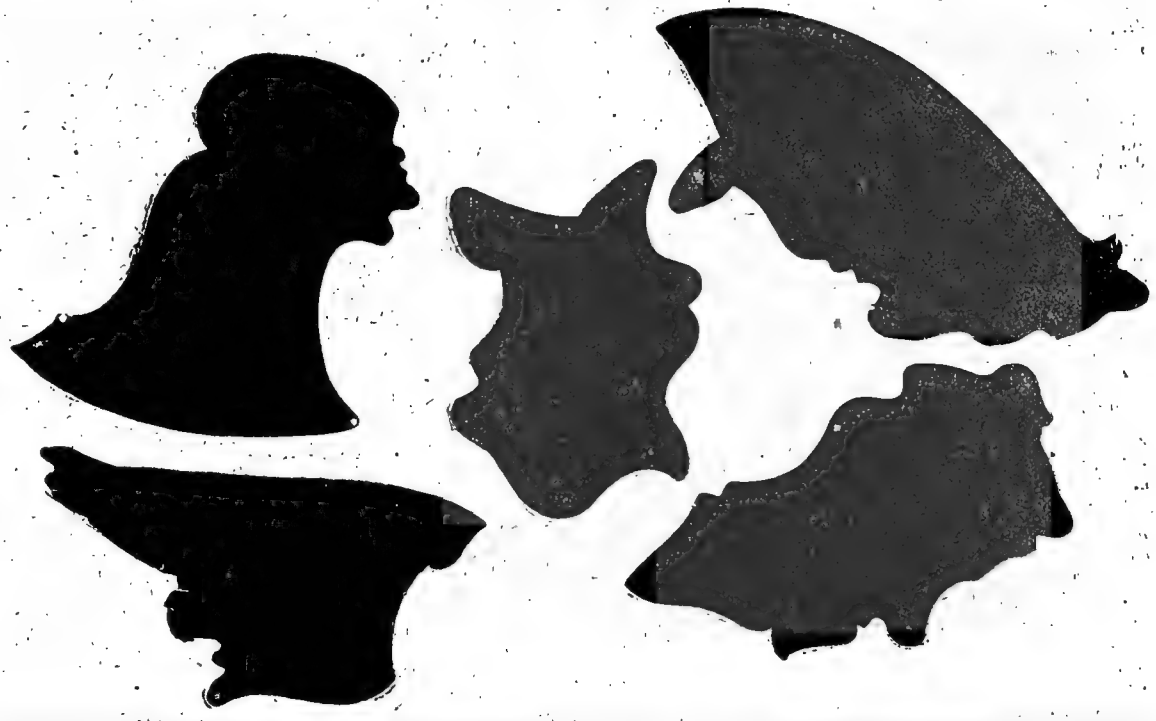
1st PRIZE - - - £1 1s.
2nd to 10th PRIZES - - "A Maori Maid,"
By Harry B. Vogel.

Cut out the five silhouettes below, and then place them together so that they form the head of a man. The portions may overlap each other if necessary.

Send your attemps in an envelope marked "FACE" to the Editor, "Short Stories," Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., to arrive not later than first post on Tuesday, February 5th.

The prizes will be given to the competitors from whom we receive the correct, or most nearly correct, solutions.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.



RESULT OF THE "LOST WORD" COMPETITION.

No competitor was fortunate enough to send in a correct attempt in this competition. There were four who sent in lists with fourteen errors, and the first and second prizes have been added together and divided equally among them. The third and fourth prizes were awarded to competitors who had fifteen mistakes:

J. J. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate, E.; M. A. Williamson, Verona House, Peterhead; F. J. Carter, 26 Regina Road, Tollington Park, N.; Miss B. Brett, Cleeve, near Cheltenham; T. Nicol, 70 Clova Road, Forest Gate, E.; R. A. N. Smyth, Hillfield, Dorchester Road, Weymouth.

Consolat on gifts have been awarded to the following:

J. W. Rushmore, 86 Foster Hill Road, Bedford; Mrs. F. C. Thomas, 84 St. Helens Road, Swansea; T. C. Williamson, 56 Prince Street, Peterhead; W. Tucker, 15 York Road, Stony Stratford, Bucks; Josh D. Watts, Kildare, Lower Edmonton; G. Loughurst, Ludlow Road, Guildford, Surrey; Miss E. Randall, Bath Road, Swindon; C. H. Poynter, 23 Exmoor Road, Southampton; E. Marshall, Kingston-by-Sea, Brighton; A. W. Adams, 255 Stapleton Road, Bristol.

LIST OF WORDS IN THE "LOST WORD" COMPETITION.

1. Cottage
2. Pond
3. Roses
4. School
5. Children
6. Gate
7. Church
8. School.
9. Sign.
10. Aprons
11. Roses
12. Ivy
13. Dog
14. Spot
15. Two
16. One
17. Roof
18. Shot
19. Shell
20. Doors
21. Walls
22. Leaves
23. Branches
24. Plant
25. Cloud
26. Bark
27. Rose
28. Curtain
29. Window
30. Out-house
31. Chair
32. Steps
33. Arch
34. Flowers
35. Leaves
36. Plants
37. Path
38. Stone
39. Explosion
40. Hands
41. Grass
42. Arms
43. Cottage
44. Prop
45. One
46. Water
47. Sign
48. Saw

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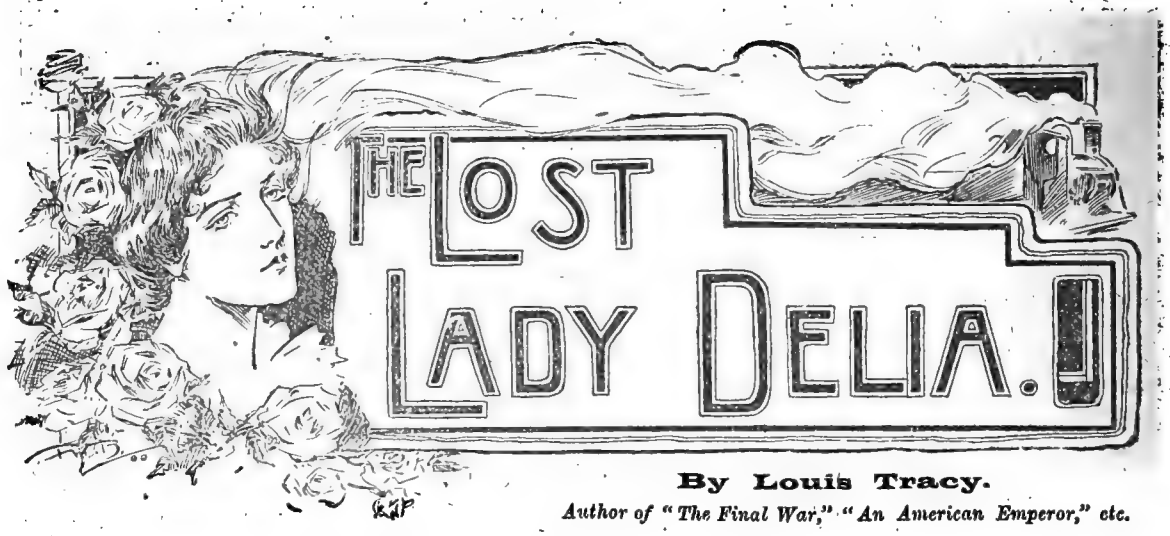

By Louis Tracy.

Author of "The Final War," "An American Emperor," etc.

READ THIS BEFORE YOU BEGIN.

LADY DELIA LYLE leaves her house one foggy November afternoon, saying she is going to see her sister at Richmond, but from that time she is not heard of.

Her husband, Sir Charles Lyle, puts the matter into the hands of detectives, Inspector Winter taking charge of the case.

Reginald Brett, a barrister friend of the Lyles, also promises to do all he can, and he finds out that Lady Delia, on the night of her disappearance, instead of going to Richmond, alighted at Sloane Square, and went to a block of flats called Raleigh Mansions.

Towards the end of the month the body of a woman, evidently murdered, is found wedged beneath a drain-pipe in the Thames at Putney, and, though Sir Charles does not identify the body, Brett imagines it to be that of Lady Delia. Shortly after this discovery Lady Delia's maid, Jane Harding, disappears. She is afterwards found to have gone on the stage.

Brett now starts investigations at Raleigh Mansions, and he fixes on two residents there as being likely to have been connected with Lady Delia. These are a Mr. Sydney H. Pyne, who is not at present in residence, and a Mrs. Hilmer, whom he finds to be Pyne's sister.

It had transpired that Pyne had gone to Monte Carlo, and thither Brett goes, and he discovers that though letters are addressed to Pyne at the Hotel du Cercle, he is not known there.

During his stay at Monte Carlo Brett becomes acquainted with an Englishman, named Albert Mensmore, whom he helps out of some money difficulties, but he does not discover anything about Pyne.

After his return Brett finds out that Sir Charles Lyle knows Albert Mensmore, but in what connection does not transpire.

A few days later Brett goes into the City, to the office of Dodge and Co., with whom he had had some speculative dealings, and from remarks made by Mr. Dodge, he thinks that Pyne and Mensmore must be one and the same man.

CHAPTER XIII.

A QUESTION OF PRINCIPLE.

"IF anyone calls, I'm out," cried Brett to his factotum, as he crossed the entrance-hall of his well-appointed flat, and flung open the door of his library.

"The guvnor's in a tantrum," observed Smith to his wife, and he settled himself to renew the perusal of Grand National training reports. He had just noticed the interesting fact that last year's winner had "jumped in for the last mile" in a gallop given to a rank outsider, when the electric bell upset his calculations.

"My master is out," he said, as he opened the door to find Mr. Winter standing on the mat.

He was about to close the door again, but the detective planted his foot against the jamb.

"Your master is not out," he answered. "I saw him come in a minute since. Tell him Mr. Winter wants to see him."

Smith's dignity was superb. "My master may be in," he cried, "but he told me to say he was out to callers."

"Tell him what I say at once," and Mr. Winter gave the other his best, "accessory-after-the-crime" glance.

"I don't see why I should," snarled Smith, but the squabble ended when Brett's voice was heard:—

"Show him in, Smith, but admit nobody else."

With an air of armed neutrality Smith ushered the representative of Scotland Yard into the library.

"You're not looking very well, sir," said Winter, his round eyes fixed on Brett with all their power.

"Was it to ask about my health that you came, Winter?"

"No, sir, not exactly. But I haven't seen you for quite a while, and as we are both interested in the same matter I thought I would look you up and compare notes."

Brett was annoyed at the interruption. He wanted to think, not to be bothered by official theories. He looked hard at Mr. Winter, wondering whether he should tell him all he knew and wash his own hands clear of the investigation in future. But there was a second picture before his mental eyes. He saw Phyllis Browne's face, not as it was that day at the Tir aux Pigeons, but with the light of happiness in it, with the joyousness of requited and undisturbed love, with the glow reflected from dancing waves, and the tremulous smile of innocent pleasure.

It was hard to believe that such a woman could place her heartfelt trust in a man who was possibly a cold-blooded murderer. Such a combination was unnatural and horrible. Already Brett was beginning to doubt the evidence of his analytical senses.

Mr. Winter meanwhile flattered himself that the other was trying to read his thoughts by looking at him fixedly.

"I have been away from home," said Brett at last. "I had occasion to go to the South of France."

"I thought so. I was sure of it. How do you manage always to get ahead of us?" Mr. Winter was enthusiastic in his admiring divination.

"You have heard about Sydney H. Pyne?" said the barrister, still keeping that inscrutable, calculating gaze upon the policeman.

"Yes. I am on his track. We may be slow, but we are sure in Scotland Yard. May I ask what luck you have had, sir?"

"In what respect?"

"As if you didn't go to Monte Carlo to find Mr. Pyne yourself! Really, Mr. Brett, the scent is too hot this time. You might as well give a 'View halloa' if you have seen him."

"Seen Sydney H. Pyne, you mean?"

"That's the gentleman."

For an instant Monsmore's future trembled in the balance. Brett almost framed the first words which would have led to his immediate arrest at the next port touched

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by the *White Heather*. But the memory of Phyllis Browne, of her agony, of the fearful scandal that must fly through society on the Riviera, restrained him. There was no hurry. He must have time to think.

"I certainly went to Monte Carlo to discover the identity of that interesting personage, but I came back, Mr. Winter, as wise as I went. The only trace I found of him was an undelivered letter awaiting him at the Hotel du Cercle."

"A letter! Wasn't he there?" Mr. Winter's face, notwithstanding its official decorum, betrayed its disappointment. This was an unlooked-for check.

"He had been there. Other letters came for him earlier, and he had received them."

"But the hotel people——"

"Did not know him. In fact, there cannot be the slightest doubt that Mr. Pyne concealed his identity at Monte Carlo under another name."

"It doesn't matter much," growled the detective. "We will nab him all the same, if he had fifty names."

"Possibly. But it is wonderful how a man may be under your very nose, and yet you may miss him."

During the next few minutes neither man spoke. Brett smiled cynically at the thought that he was actually shielding Lady Delia's probable slayer from the minions of the law. He marvelled at himself for his irresolution. Nevertheless, he would wait. Mensmore could not escape him now. Perhaps the business might be managed without the dramatic features that would accompany an arrest forthwith. And there were some things that yet required explanation. If his Monte Carlo acquaintance really killed Lady Delia, then he was the strangest criminal that Brett had ever encountered during the course of his varied career.

The policeman misinterpreted his expression.

"You can't laugh at us this time, Mr. Brett," he cried. "Scotland Yard and yourself evolved the same theory, eh, and we can't fly off to the south of France as readily as you."

"Your skill is profound, no doubt. Indeed, I wonder at it, considering the mysterious way in which the missing man left his address at a post office."

The other reddened. "That was simple enough, I know; but we got on his track before that."

"By watching me when I visited his sister."

"You saw me outside the Jollity Theatre, then?"

"Of course. What did you expect?"

Mr. Winter recovered his placidity. "There's no use quarrelling about it, Mr. Brett," he laughed. "I did get that wrinkle from you. But how on earth were we to know what to do, when there were seventy-one flats occupied by respectable people, and one closed for months, the caretaker told us."

"I hope you have ceased your surveillance so far as I am concerned."

"Honour bright, sir. I won't do it again. Besides, we must lay hands on Pyne sooner or later."

"What steps are you taking?"

"The Monte Carlo police are making inquiries. They have his description. It has also gone to America."

"Why America?"

"Because he spent some time there. He only returned from the States early last year. His sister had not seen him for years, and a rare old row they had when he turned up. He had not much money, so she helped him, and he settled down for a time in the same mansions as herself."

"Who told you all this?"

"Mrs. Hilmer, and a precious lot of trouble she gave me. She is a clever woman, that."

"It was rather too bad to pester her about it, poor lady."

"I only followed your lead, sir."

This was so true that Brett changed the conversation.

"What sort of a man is Pyne? Have you his description?"

"Yes. Here it is." Mr. Winter produced a copy of the POLICE GAZETTE, a publication never seen by the public, but of large circulation among the police of the United Kingdom. The details were fairly accurate as to Mensmore's personal appearance, but there was no photograph. Oddly enough, Brett was relieved to note this serious deficiency.

"You did not get his picture?"

"No. Mrs. Hilmer declared that she had not a single photograph of her brother in her possession."

"Did she—tell you his real name?" the barrister had almost said, but he deflected the question. "Did she give you any hint as to a possible cause for this apparently unnecessary crime?"

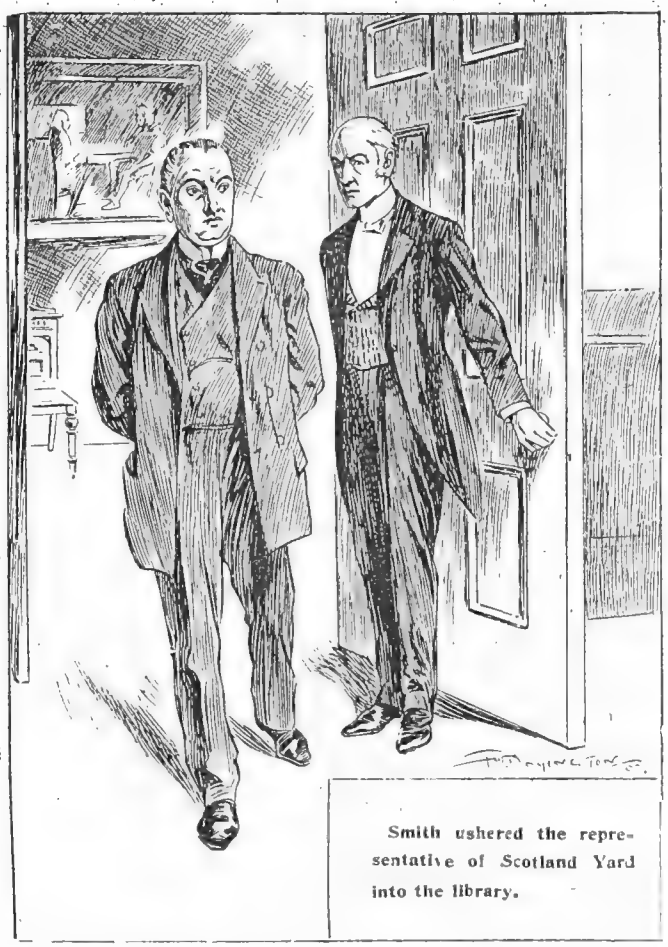
"Not a word."

"Then you did not mention Lady Delia to her?"

"No. Sir Charles has always implored me to keep his wife's name out of my inquiries until it became absolutely impossible to conceal it in view of a public prosecution. He wants to know definitely when that time comes."

"Why?"

The detective did not reply for a moment. When he spoke he leant forward and subdued his voice. "I am as



Smith ushered the representative of Scotland Yard into the library.

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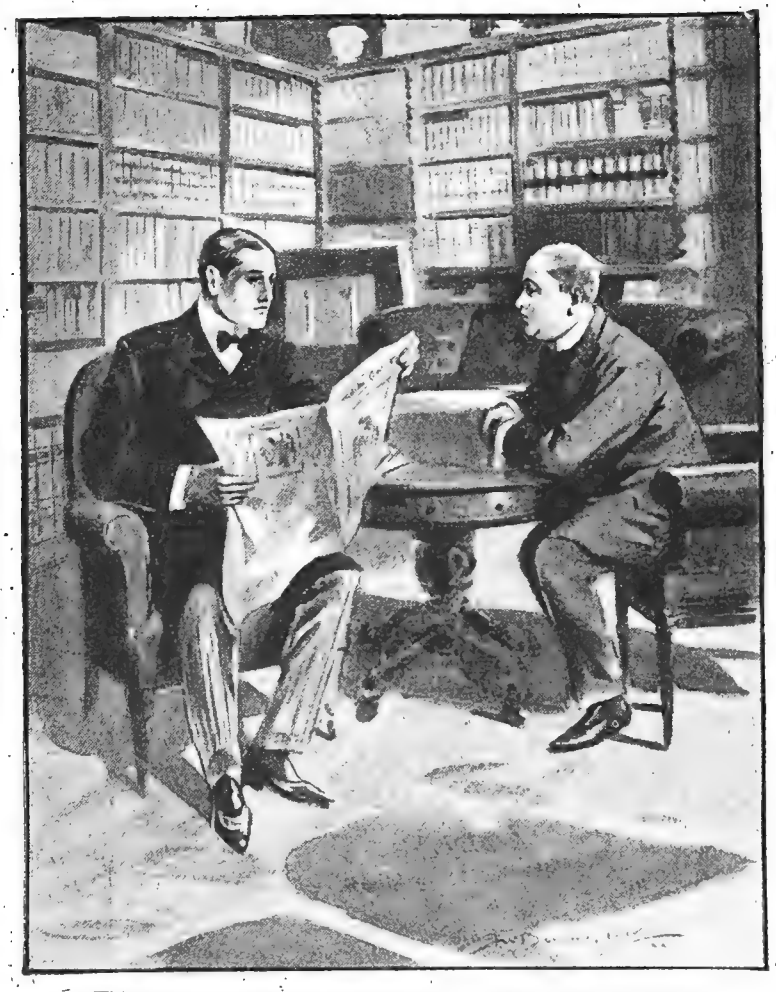

Mr. Winter produced a copy of the "Police Gazette."

sure as I am sitting here, sir, that Sir Charles will not live if any disgrace should come to be attached to his wife's memory."

"Do you mean that he will kill himself?"

"I do. He has changed a great deal since this affair happened. He is not the same man. He appears to be always mooning about her. And people say that they were not so devoted to one another when she was alive."

Again did the barrister switch off their talk from an unpleasant topic.

"This description of Pyne is not much use," he said. "It applies to every athletic young Englishman of good physique and gentlemanly appearance."

"Quite true. I don't depend on that for his arrest, but it will be valuable for identification. 'Blue eyes, light brown hair, fresh clear complexion, well-modelled nose and chin.' Some of these things can be changed by tricks, but not all. For instance, there would be no use in smoking a man with black eyes and irregular features.

"'Smoking' him?"

"Oh, that's our way of putting it. Following him, it means."

"Suppose the French police don't succeed in catching him?"

"We will get him at Raleigh Mansions. He is sure to think that Lady Delia's fate has never been determined, and he will return when the inquiry has blown over, to all appearance."

"You have quite made up your mind, then, that Sydney H. Pyne is the murderer?"

"It looks uncommonly like it. At any rate, he knows something about it. If not, why did he bolt to France two days after the crime? Why has he concealed his identity? Why does he take pains to get at his correspondence in the manner he has adopted? And, by Jove! suppose he isn't in Monte Carlo at all, but in London all the time!"

Mr. Winter glowed with his sudden inspiration, but Brett drily kept him to the lower level of realities.

"Pyne is, or was, in Monte Carlo. Of that you may be sure. He, and none other, got the letters sent to the Hotel du Cercle. I cannot for the life of me imagine why he did not take the last one. But let us look at what we know. Lady Delia, we will say, went to Pyne's chambers, secretly and of her own accord. That may be taken as fairly established. Hence there is a blank in our intelligence until she appears as a hardly recognisable corpse, stuffed by hands beneath an old drainpipe in the Thames at Putney. How do you fill up that gap, Mr. Winter?"

"Simply enough. Pyne, or some other person, persuaded her to voluntarily accompany him to Putney. She was killed there, and not in London. It would be almost a matter of impossibility for any man to have conveyed her lifeless body from Raleigh Mansions to Putney without attracting some notice. One man could *not* do it. Several might, but it is madness to imagine that a number of of people would join together for the purpose of killing this poor lady."

"The seemingly impossible is often accomplished."

"Do you really believe, then, that she met her death in London?"

"I have quite an open mind on the question."

"You forget that she had clearly resolved early that day to visit her sister at Richmond, and Putney is in the direct road. What more reasonable than to assume——"

"Beware of assumptions! You are assuming all this time that Pyne was a principal in her murder."

"Very well, Mr. Brett. Then I ask you straight out if you don't agree with me?"

"I do not."

This declaration astounded the barrister himself. Often the mere utterance of one's own thoughts is a surprise. Speech seems to stiffen the wavering outlines of reflection, and the new creation may differ essentially from its embryo. It was so with Brett in this instance.

Ever since Mr. Winter's arrival had aroused him from the positive stupor caused by Mr. Dodge's unwitting revelation, Reginald Brett had been slowly but definitely deciding that Mensmore did not kill Lady Delia. He had seen him, unprepared, facing death as preferable to dishonour. At such moments a man's soul is laid bare. With the shadow of a great crime upon it Mensmore's actions

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could not have been so genuine and straightforward as they undoubtedly were.

Mensmore, of course, might in some way be bound up with the mystery surrounding Lady Delia's movements. His very utterances in Brett's room at the Hotel du Cercle implied as much. That was another matter. It would receive his (Brett's) most earnest attention. But the major hypothesis, so quickly jumped at by the police, needed much more substantiation than it had yet obtained.

That it was plausible was demonstrated by the barrister's readiness to adopt it at the outset. Even now that his impulse to fasten the crime on Mensmore weakened he wondered at his eagerness to defend him.

Mr. Winter was even more surprised.

"I don't see how you can take that view," he cried. "Pyne's behaviour is, to say the least, unaccountable. If he is an innocent man then he must be a foolish one. Besides, why should he necessarily be innocent? This is the first gleam of light we have had in a very dark business, and I mean to follow it up."

The vindictive emphasis of his tone showed that the detective was annoyed at Brett's impassive attitude. He even went so far as to dimly evolve a theory that the barrister wished to throw him off Pyne's trail on account of his sympathy for Mrs. Hillmer, but Reggie rapidly dispelled this notion.

"You are here, I suppose, to ask my advice in pursuance of our understanding that we are working together in the matter, as it were?" he said.

"Well, something of the kind, sir."

"Then I recommend that we see the inside of that closed flat in Raleigh Mansions at the earliest moment."

"Do you mean by a search warrant?"

"Certainly not. Do you want the whole neighbourhood to know of it? You have probably heard of locks being picked before to-day. You and I, and none other, must have a quiet look round the place without anyone being the wiser."

Mr. Winter hesitated, but the prospect was attractive. "I think I can manage it," he said, smiling reflectively. "Will six this evening suit?"

"Admirably."

"Then I will call for you."

After a parting glare at Smith, who returned it, nose in air, Mr. Winter ran down the stairs, murmuring, "Blest if I can understand Mr. Brett. But this is a good move. We might learn something."

CHAPTER XIV.

No. 12, Raleigh Mansions.

When the door of Pyne's or Mensmore's flat swung open before the skilful application of a skeleton key, a gust of cold air swept from out of the interior blackness, and whirled an accumulation of dust down the stairs.

It is curious how a disused house seems to bottle up, as it were, an atmospheric accumulation which always seeks to escape at the first available moment. Emptiness is more than a mere word; it has life and the power of growth. A residence closed for a week is less depressing than if it has not been inhabited for a month. If the period of neglect be lengthened into a year, the sense of dreariness is magnified immeasurably.

In this instance the mysterious abode might have been the ghostly abiding place of disembodied spirits, so cold were its aspects, so uninviting the dim vista that sprung into uncertain vision before the flickering rays of a wax vesta struck by the detective.

But neither the policeman nor his companion was a nervous subject.

They entered at once, closed the door by its latch, and, aided by other matches, found the switch of the electric light.

In this bright radiance the indefinable vanished. The flat became a cosy, fairly well-appointed bachelor's "diggings," neglected and untidy, yet not without a semblance of comfort which only needed the presence of a sturdy housemaid and a fire to be converted into the ordinary chambers with which the locality abounds.

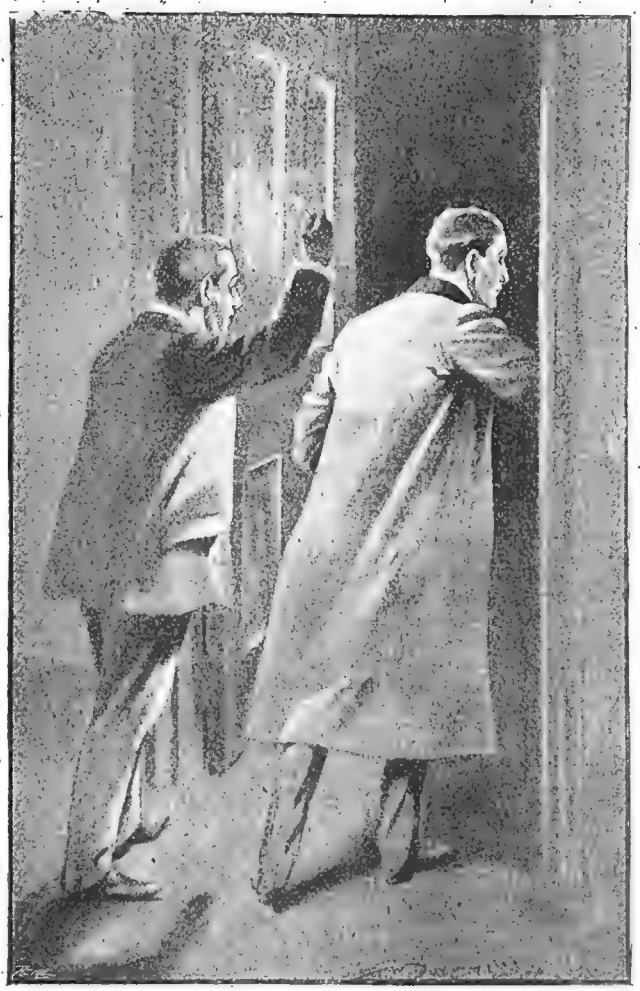
Their first care was to draw down all the blinds, the neglect of which housewifely proceeding argued the careless departure of a mere male when the place was vacated.

A rapid preliminary survey followed, and drew from Brett the remark:—

"Furnished by a woman, but occupied by a man."

Mr. Winter agreed, but he did not know why, so he put a tentative question on the point.

"Don't you see," said Brett, "that the carpets and furniture match, that the beds have vallances, that the spare bedroom for a guest is even more elaborate than that used by the tenant, that care has been taken in fitting up the kitchen, and taste displayed in the selection of pieces of



So uninviting was the dim vista that sprung into uncertain vision before the flickering rays of a wax vesta.

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"Here's a find!" shouted the detective.

bric-à-brac. Only a woman attends to these things. On the other hand, a card tray has been used as a receptacle for cigar ash, the pictures—no woman ever buys a picture—have been picked up promiscuously from shops where they sell sporting prints, and the sides of the mantelpieces are chipped by having feet propped against them. There are plenty of other signs, but these suffice."

Thenceforth the two men devoted themselves to their task, each after his kind.

The representative of Scotland Yard hunted for documents, photographs, torn envelopes; he looked in the covers of books to see if they were inscribed; he opened every drawer; ransacked every corner, peered into the interior of jars, pots, and ovens; appraised the value of the furniture, noted its age, and was specially zealous in studying the appearance of the only bedroom which had been occupied so far as he could judge.

Brett, having given a casual glance round, entered the sitting-room, selected the most comfortable chair, and proceeded to envelop himself in clouds of smoke.

He had not spent two minutes in Mensmore's flat before he made a striking discovery.

The dwelling consisted of a central passage, dividing two equal portions from each other. That on the right contained a drawing-room and a large bedroom, with dressing-room attached. On the left were another bedroom, a dining-room, a kitchen, and store-room. At the end of the passage, which terminated in the transverse corridor, were the bath-room, a pantry, and a small room, empty now, but apparently designed for a servant's bedroom.

The furniture, as has been stated, was good in quality and sufficient for its purposes. But the fact which immediately impressed Brett was that the arrangement of the sitting-room differed essentially from the other details of the flat.

The same care had not been taken in the disposition of the articles. They had been dumped down anyhow, without taste or regard for suitable position. The carpet had not been bought for this special apartment like the carpets elsewhere. A handsome ebony cabinet stood in the wrong place. The blue china ornaments obviously intended to fill its shelves were littered about the mantelpiece or on small tables, whilst the Satsuma ware meant for the overmantel was stiffly disposed on the cabinet.

Small matters these, but Brett thought them more fruitful of accurate theory than the detective's hunt for a written history of the crime!

So as he smoked, he mused, and examined.

"The drawing-room was left to the last before being furnished," he thought. "The usual course. It was left for some time probably. The rest of the flat was arranged by a woman—Mrs. Hilmer in all likelihood—before the arrival of her brother. Then he came and tackled the vacant room. The history of the place is as plain to me as though I were present. More than that, a woman—Mrs. Hilmer again, let us say—fixed upon these latter purchases, but without measurements. She did not personally see to their adaptability, and she certainly did not supervise their final arrangement. Now, why was that? Again, these things are more worn than those in the other rooms. Were they bought second-hand? If so, why? A woman thinks most of her drawing-room. It is the last place in which she would economise."

Mr. Winter entered, anxious and puzzled.

"Found anything?" said Brett, without looking at him.

"Not a rag, not a piece of old newspaper with a date on it. A lot of papers were burnt in the kitchen grate, but from the remnants I judge that they were mostly bills."

"The place has been systematically cleared, eh?"

"It looks like it."

"Going to hunt here?"

"Yes. You don't seem to take much interest in the premises, Mr. Brett, though you persuaded me to do a bit of housebreaking in order to get here."

"I find the quietude good for thought, Mr. Winter. Be good enough not to make more noise than is absolutely necessary."

The other sniffed. He was disappointed. He hoped for something tangible from this visit, and the outlook was far from promising.

"This room appears to have been lived in a good deal," he growled.

"That is one way of looking at it."

"Is there any other way?" His voice snapped out the question as if he held the barrister personally responsible for his failure to gain a clue.

"No, Mr. Winter, I should have guessed your point of view exactly."

"My point of view, indeed! Do you want me to draw up another chair and light a pipe? Should we be enlightened by tobacco smoke?"

"I cannot trust your tobacco. Try a cigar."

The detective angrily thumped a Chesterfield lounge to see if it betrayed aught suspicious.

At that instant Reggie's glance rested on the fireplace. The grate contained the ashes of a fire, a fire not long lighted. This, combined with the undrawn blinds, argued a departure early in the morning.

"He went to Monte Carlo by the day Channel service," mused Brett. "He may have left a few hours after Lady Delia's death, as Mrs. Hilmer was not certain as to the exact date."

Somehow the few cinders attracted him. They had, perchance, witnessed a tragedy.

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Suddenly he stopped smoking. He was so startled by something he had seen that Mr. Winter must have noticed his agitation were not the detective at that instant intently screwing his eyes to peer behind the back of the elaborate cabinet.

On the hearth was a handsome Venetian fender. Into each end was loosely socketed a beautifully-moulded piece of ironwork to hold the fire-irons. That on the left was whole, but from that on the right a small spike had been broken off.

By comparison with its fellow the missing portion was identical with the bit of iron found imbedded in Lady Delia's skull. Of this damning fact Brett had no manner of doubt, though the incriminatory article itself was then locked in a drawer in his own residence.

He did not move. He sat as one transfixed.

What a weapon for such a deed. Was ever more outlandish instrument used with murderous intent? The entire bracket could easily be detached from the fender, and would, no doubt, inflict a terrible blow. But why seize this clumsy device when it actually supported a heavy brass poker?

The thing savoured of madness, of the wild vagary of a homicidal maniac. It was incomprehensible, strange beyond belief.

Yet as Brett pictured up the final scene in that tragedy, as he saw his ill-fated friend stagger helplessly to the ground before a treacherous and crushing stroke, a fierce light leapt into his face and his lips set tight with unflinching purpose.

Had Mensmore been within reach that moment he would assuredly have been lodged in a felon's cell forthwith. No excuse, no palliation could be accepted. The man who could so foully slay a gentle, kindly, high-minded lady deserved the utmost rigour of the law, no matter what the circumstances that led to the commission of the deed.

It was not often that Brett allowed impulse to so master reason.

In queer altruistic mood he asked himself why he did not spring from his chair, and, tearing the bracket from its supports, exhibit it to his fellow-worker, whilst he gave, in a few passionate sentences, the information that would set the French police to scour the Mediterranean littoral until they found the *White Heather*. Of what matter to him was the suffering of a sister or sweetheart? Did the man who killed Lady Delia reck of these things? Yes, he would do it——"

But a cry of triumph from Mr. Winter arrested the fateful words even as they trembled on his lips.

"Here's a find!" shouted the detective. "Thinking is all very well, Mr. Brett, but hard work is better. What do you make of that?"

"That" was a letter, which in the manner known to many a puzzled householder, had slipped down behind a drawer in the cabinet, to be crushed against the wardrobe at the back, and lie there forgotten and unnoticed.

Even in his perturbed state the barrister could not help glancing at the crumpled document, first noting the date, October 15th of the year just closed, with the superscription, "Mountain Butts, Wyoming." There was no envelope.

It was addressed to "Dear Bertie," and ran as follows:

"Your welcome note and its draft for fifty dollars came to hand last week. My sisters and I can never forget your generosity. We know you are hard up, and that you can ill spare these frequent gifts, or loans, as you are pleased to call them. You and I have been in many a tight place, old chap, and I never knew you to fail either with hand or heart. And when we landed into this ranch, on my advice, and nearly starved to death, it was you who were bold enough to cut yourself adrift so that you might make something to keep the pot boiling.

"But the tide is turning. You know my failing; this time I will try not to be too sanguine. There have been big gold discoveries in this country. It is now firmly believed that all our land is auriferous, and the scoundrel who sold us this beggarly ranch has tried to upset our title. Thanks to your foresight, he was knocked out at the first round, So I may soon have big news for you. By Jove, won't it be a change if we both become rich? And won't the girls have a time in Paris? However, I must not say too much this time. I have been taught caution by repeated failures. Write by return, and say if this reaches you all right—Your faithful friend, SYDNEY H. PYNE."

"What do you think of that?" cried the detective, when Brett had slowly mastered the contents of the letter.

"Think! I am too dazed to think."

"We can now learn all about him from America."

"About whom?"

"About Pyne, of course."

"Then did Pyne come by the same mail as this letter in order to murder Lady Delia? It is dated October 15th, and she was killed on November 6th. It takes twelve days,

Brett sprang forward, fell on his knees, and intently examined the iron rest.

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at the quickest, for a letter to come here from Wyoming. And Pyne, the writer of it, not the receiver, must have travelled in the same steamer or its immediate successor."

Mr. Winter's face fell, but he stuck to his point: "Anyhow, Pyne was here about that time. I have seen the secretary to the company that owns these flats. Pyne took the room for six months from September 1st. When asked for references he gave his sister's name, and as she banks with the National—and she has always paid her rent for five years—it was good enough. Still, I must confess that Pyne could hardly be in Wyoming in October if he lived here in September and in November."

The barrister answered between his set teeth: "Yes, it is rather puzzling."

"Perhaps the letter was left there as a plant."

"An elaborate one. It must have been conceived a month before the murder."

"But suppose it never came from Wyoming. We have no proof that it was written in America."

"We have proof of nothing at present."

"Well, Mr. Brett, have you a theory? This is the place where you ought to shine, you know."

"I have no theory. I must think for hours, for days, before I see my way clear."

"Clear to what, sir?"

"To telling you how, when, and where to arrest the murderer of Lady Delia."

"So this 'find' of mine is of great importance?"

"Undoubtedly. I remember its contents sufficiently, but you will let me see it again if necessary?"

"With pleasure, sir. And that reminds me. You never returned that small bit of iron to me. You recollect I lent it to you some time since."

"Perfectly. Come with me. I will model it in wax and give it to you."

"All right, sir; but as we are here I may as well continue my search. I may drop on something else of value."

Brett resumed his seat, and did not stir until the detective had completely rummaged the cabinet. The reading of that queer epistle from Pyne to Bertie—from the real Simon Pure to the sham one—from one man to his double—had stopped him at the very threshold of disclosure.

The document impressed him as being genuine. If so, who on earth was Pyne, and why had Mensmore taken his name, if that was the solution of the tangle?

Whatever the explanation, he would not jump to a conclusion. The web had closed too securely round Mensmore to allow of escape. Hence, Brett could bide his time. Another week might solve many elements in the case now indistinct and nebulous. He would wait.

Winter finally satisfied himself there was nothing else in the cabinet. He approached the fireplace, peered into every vase on the overmantel, picked with his penknife at the back of the frame to feel for other letters, and in doing so several times kicked the fender.

The barrister vaguely wondered whether the man of method would note the missing portion of the iron "dog."

"Surely," he thought, "he will see it now," as Mr. Winter bent to examine the ashes, and actually took the poker from off the very support itself in order to rake among the cinders.

The other even scrutinised the fire-irons, but the too obvious fact that, so to speak, stared him in the face, escaped notice. He was quite wrapped up in his theory that Lady Delia had been killed at Putney, and not in Sloane Square.

At last he quitted the room, and walked off to the small apartments at the end of the main corridor.

Instantly Brett sprang forward, fell on his knees, and intently examined the iron rest with a strong lens. It bore no visible signs at the locality of the break. Taking some wax from his pocket, Reggie took a slight impression of the fracture.

When Mr. Winter returned he found the barrister sitting in his chair, still smoking, and with set face and fixed eyes.

Soon afterwards they left the flat, carefully leaving all things as they found them. They said little on their way to Victoria Street, for Brett was trying to explain Mensmore's attitude at Monte Carlo, and the detective was considering the best use to which he could put that all-important letter.

Besides, Mr. Winter attributed his companion's silence to annoyance. Had not he, Winter, laid hands on the only direct piece of evidence yet discovered as to Pyne's identity, and this in defiance of Brett's spoken philosophy? He could afford to be generous and not to worry his amateur colleague with questions.

Thus they reached the barrister's chambers. Brett asked the other to sit down for a moment whilst he obtained a model of the small lump of iron. He took it into his bedroom, fitted it into the wax impression obtained at Raleigh Mansions, and noted that the two coincided perfectly.

Then he crushed the wax into shapelessness again.

He handed the bit of iron to Winter without comment.

The latter said: "It had better remain in my keeping now, sir, but if you want to see it again, of course I will be very glad——"

"I shall never want it again," said Brett, and his voice was harsh and cold, for he had seldom experienced such a strain as the last hour had given him. "It is an accursed thing. It has caused one death already, and may cause others."

"I sincerely hope it will cause a man to be hanged," cried the detective, "for this affair is the warmest I have ever tackled. However, I'll get him as sure as his name's Pyne, if he has forty aliases and as many addresses."

Smith let Mr. Winter out. The latter, halting for a moment at the door, said quietly, "Is your name Pyne?"

"No, it ain't, any more than yours is Summer. See?"

Each man thought he had had his joke, so they were better friends thenceforth, but Mr. Winter was thoughtful as he passed into the street.

"This is a funny business," he communed. "There isn't enough evidence against Pyne to hang a cat, yet I *think* he's the man. And Brett's a queer chap. Was he cut up about me finding the letter, or has he got some notion in his head. He's as close as an oyster. I wonder if he *did* dine at Hampstead on the evening of the murder, as he said at the inquest? I must inquire into it."

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Guilty Gold," by Headon Hill, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. J. Cunningham, 23 Havelock Street, Lower Broughton, Manchester. Attempts this week may deal with Stories about ANY SUBJECT, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 28th. Post-cards only, please.

Consolation.

LATE one evening, as a messenger from a local paper was going home, he heard a person who was struggling in a river close by calling for help.

He shouted:

"Hello there! Are you drowning?"

"I am. Save me, I'm lost," frantically exclaimed the drowning man.

"What a pity," said the messenger consolingly, "you are too late for the last edition to-night, but cheer up, you'll have a whole column to yourself to-morrow morning."

J. C.

Wanted a Cave For Two.

WHEN news came the other day of the French plan to invade England, an Irish militiaman stationed at Halifax was heard to remark that if ever an enemy landed in this country he would certainly bolt, taking a good stock of provisions, and hide away in a cave he knew of.

When the colonel heard of it he called the man out of the ranks on parade, and lectured him severely on his cowardice.

"You're a disgrace to the regiment!" he said. "Fancy a man of the 26th West Riding threatening to run away! But I'd be after you in quick time, my man, never fear."

"Sure, an' you'd be welcome, colonel. But don't forget to bring yer own praties an' things, sor."

J. R. T.

"There's a Language that's Mute."

A GENTLEMAN one Sunday morning was led to watch a young country girl on the high road from the village to the church by observing that she looked hither and thither, this way and that, upon the road, as if she had lost something.

The bells were ceasing to ring, and there was no one visible on the road, except the girl and the gentleman, who recognised in her the errand-maid of a neighbouring farmer.

"What are you looking for, my girl?" asked he as the damsel continued to examine the road.

She answered gravely:

"Sir, I'm looking to see if my master be gone to church."

Now, her master had a wooden leg.

J. I.

He Wasn't Even Murmuring.

A BOER general on his way to camp, hearing groans, proceeded to the spot whence they came, and found a Boer soldier nursing a wounded arm, groaning loudly every now and then.

"For shame!" said the general, "making all that fuss about a scratched arm? Why, there's a man over yonder with his head off and he's not murmuring!"

W. P.

Why He Wanted to Leave.

THE man who did odd jobs in a certain school gave up his place the other day.

When asked what was his reason, he said:

"I'm honest, and I won't stand being suspected. If I find a handkerchief or pencil about the school when I'm sweeping, I give it up.

"Every now and again, however, the teacher, or someone who is too cowardly to face me, will put a slur upon me. Why, a little while ago I saw wrote on the blackboard, 'Find the least common multiple.' Well, I looked from cellar to garret for that multiple, and I wouldn't know the thing if I met it.

"Last night, in big writing on the board, it said, 'Find the greatest common measure.' 'Well,' I said, 'both o' them things are lost now, an' I'll be accused of stealing 'em,' so I chucked the job."

E. C.

Mistook the Verdict.

FOR a grave breach of the football laws, a crack player was brought before the authorities, and put on trial in a room overlooking a busy street. So great indeed was the clatter of the traffic, that many remarks made by those judging his case were quite inaudible to the footballer.

"We have now considered both yours and the referee's version of the affair, my man," mumbled the chairman at last, "and have no hesitation in suspending you till the end of the season. It is entirely your own fault that we have been obliged to cut your wings close for the winter. You can go."

Outside, a friend sympathised with the footballer.

"What's the trouble?" asked the player. "I'm not suspended."

"Yes, you are—till the end of the season. Didn't you hear the chairman say they'd cut your wings close for the winter?"

"No," stammered the player, aghast. "I thought he said, 'oblige me by closing the window, and then you can go!'"

R. A. H. G.

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Not from Arcadia.

During the visit of a travelling pantomime company to Dumfries a very ludicrous *contretemps* occurred, which, nevertheless, "brought down the house."

Owing to the illness of one of the juvenile members of the company, a local substitute had to be obtained for the purpose of figuring in one of the sylvan scenes.

On being accosted in stage parlance by the hero of the piece with "Sweet child, when camest thou from Arcadia? Tell me! Tell me, prithee!" the youngster cried out shrilly:

"Please, sir, Ah'm no frae 'Cadia'; Ah'm frae Dalbeattie, and Ah've been promised tuppence an' an orange to sit quiet an' haud my tongue."

J. C.

New-fashioned Beef Tea.

I was stricken down with fever while serving in Bermuda, and after a critical week or ten days, luckily turned the corner and made slow but steady progress on the road towards recovery.

The doctor ordered me beef tea, made fresh daily, and in obedience to his command the negro cook brought me the nourishing liquid every morning.

One day he brought it in while the doctor was in the room and handed me the cup. I was hungry, and swallowed a mouthful eagerly, but the taste disgusted me, and I spluttered and choked.

The doctor's sharp eye detected something wrong, and he said:

"Hello, sergeant, what's the matter?"

I pointed to the liquid in the cup in eloquent silence.

He took it, smelt it, tasted it, and cried indignantly to the cook:

"What in the name of conscience is this, Sambo? This is not beef tea."

"Oh, yes, sah, dat beef tea, sah," replied the cook. "I not have time fetch de beef from store dis mawnin', so make um sergeant's beef tea out of cow's head!"

W. A.

The Bag Had a Hole In It.

Mr. Bowser, in the midst of a heated argument the other evening, fell over the cat and hurt his nose.

"That's enough!" he shouted. "I'll kill the brute—I've long threatened to," and catching the unfortunate feline as it was about to dive into the coal cellar, he managed, at the expense of a badly scratched hand, to ram it into an old Gladstone-bag, along with a couple of bricks, and he set off then and there in the direction of the canal.

Arriving at the dark towing-path, he felt his way to the edge of the water, then, with a mighty swing, he launched his burden into the middle of the stream. Such power did he put into his arm that he overbalanced himself and fell in himself with a mighty splash, and narrowly escaped a watery grave.

Some hour or so later, Mr. Bowser arrived home dripping wet, cold, and cross, but triumphant, to find the cat waiting on the mat for him.

"Oh, jumping Jerusalem!" he yelled, "why I've drowned the brute."

"I don't think so, my dear," replied Mrs. Bowser sweetly, "if you recollect that old Gladstone-bag had a large hole in it, and——" but Bowser had vanished upstairs.

H. E. L.

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Man-Afraid-of-the Sun's Bear.

SEVERAL years ago, when No Man s Land was overrun with roving bands of Indians and cattlemen, who fought each other with equal vigour and cheerfulness, I was sent to locate a ranch site in Texas near the north boundary of the Pan-handle, for a Mexican cattle company.

At Santa Fé I looked up an old ex-boss of my father's ranch, a Mexican and Indian half-breed, who, if he could be induced to keep from loving to an exaggerated extent his potent enemy, *mescal*, was the best all-round cow-hand I ever saw; probably an inheritance from his father, who had been an old time California cattle-driver.

In a wretched little saloon in the Mexican quarter I found José sitting at a bullet-scarred table and fondly caressing a glass of his old enemy. His eyes were a bit watery, and as I entered he was saying to the bar-keeper:

"Yes, Miguel, they staked my poor *padre* alive over a red ants' nest, and who knows what tortures he endured?" —with an expressive shrug and shiver—"We found his bones years after, and I swore everlasting vengeance on every Apache."

José always told his story when the *mescal* was getting in its fine work; later he would be looking for six-shooter victims.

"Oh yes, Beltran," he cried, catching sight of me. "Hail friend, how glad I am to see thee; thou art no longer a coward and afraid of big José, eh? How is thy father, thy lady mother, and everything at Las Cruces?"

After answering the many questions, I managed to get José outside the saloon and explain my errand, asking him to let *mescal* alone and be my guide to Texas.

"Si! si!" of course he would for the sake of his dear old *patron*, Don Luis, and his son as well. Besides his mother was of the Arapahoe tribe; we could go to No Man's Land or the reservation and see her, too.

In the course of two or three days José and I bought a couple of stout ponies, and as we had our own saddle accoutrements, some bacon, flour, coffee, sugar and meat, coffee-pot and skillet were the only things needed.

So one bright clear morning in September, we saddled our ponies, tied on our blankets and provisions, and rode out from the famous old town, taking the direction of the historical Santa Fé trail, which we were to follow as far as Round Mound, then striking eastward to the Pan-Handle.

The weather was perfect and the horses in fine condition. In the course of several uneventful days we rode up to the circle L. S. ranch and put up for the night.

Making the ranch our general headquarters, we took trips into the surrounding country and in a couple of weeks managed to find about what was wanted—good pasturage, water, timber and a fine location for the home ranch and main corra's. After writing up my report I was ready to accede to José's desire of visiting his Indian relations.

From one of the circle L. S. punchers we learnt that a band of Arapahoes was encamped near Beaver Creek, and accordingly we set our faces in that direction. Early one morning three days later we rode over a ridge and there before us, in a little hollow, nestled the Indian village. From the smoke holes in the tepees thin columns of smoke lazily curled heavenwards and, here and there, *travois* ponies came in loaded down with fire-wood.

Only a few Indians were moving about, and a few saddled ponies stood before the owners' tepees. The village seemed unusually quiet, but when we were finally spied by a couple of wolfish-looking dogs, they raised such a row that in a moment we were surrounded by innumerable dogs, whooping children and questioning squaws.

On asking for his mother José learnt that she had died the spring previous and that she had intrusted to Grey Wolf a gold and silver bracelet for him. It was one that his father had given her for a wedding present, and originally came from Spain.

Pressing our ponies through the crowd we came to Grey Wolf's tepee, dismounted and crawled within.

Grey Wolf's squaw was pounding some dried meat, but when we entered she brought us water from a stone jar without, and José and I washed our faces and hands of the dust that had accumulated during our journey. Meanwhile our saddles were brought in and the ponies led to graze.

After our ablutions the squaw brought out a plug of tobacco, a cutting board, and a stone pipe, which, according to Indian etiquette. we smoked alternately.

It seemed strange to see the squaw doing the honours of host, but we finally learnt that most of the men and young bucks had gone on a hunting and horse-stealing expedition and would not return for a week or more.

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The squaw cooked some meat, which, with our provisions, made a very acceptable meal.

During our after-dinner smoke José informed me that he would have to put in his time during our stay in mourning for his mother, and forthwith went to his uncle Eagle Feather's tepee and seemed quite inconsolable.

In order to pass time, I struck up the acquaintance of some boys and spent the afternoon watching them run races, shoot their bows and arrows, and swim in a creek near by.

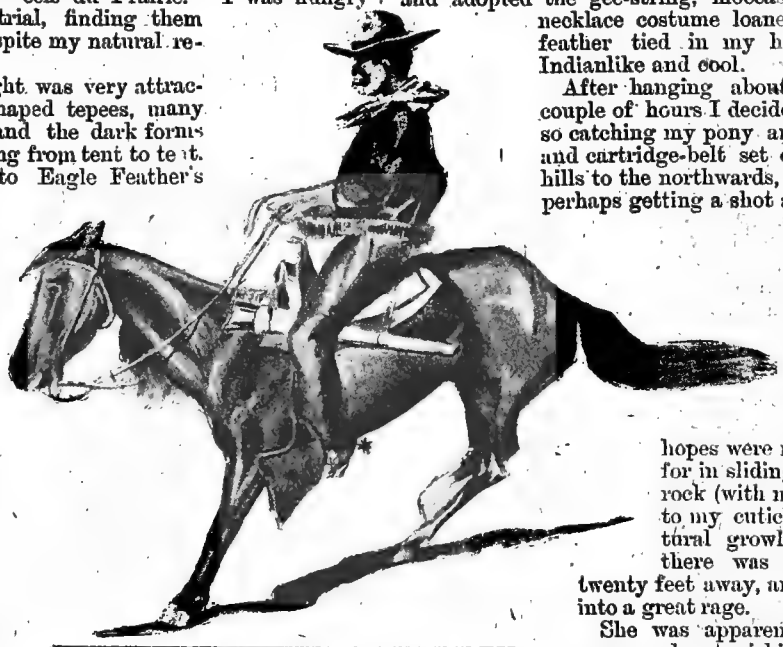
For supper we had fried rattle-snake on our menu, or, as José called them, "eels du Prairie." I was hungry and gave them a trial, finding them really very good despite my natural repugnance.

The village at night was very attractive, with its cone-shaped tepees, many bright little fires and the dark forms of the Indians gliding from tent to tent.

I strolled over to Eagle Feather's tepee and found José droning a plaintive little mourning song. Eagle Feather greeted me hospitably, and finally when I got to the subject of bear he told me through José, that he had killed a cub of the medicine bear a week previous.

"Ask him what he means by medicine bear?" I said to José.

The old man loaded his long red stone pipe, lighted it with a glowing coal that his squaw handed to him in her bare hand, took a puff or two, and began.



We slid down into the dry creek bed.

Finally after ten minutes of guttural mumblings he stopped, and José interpreted.

"He says that many years ago an Arapahoe brave took refuge from a band of pursuing Comanches in a bear's cave. The she-bear was there, but made no effort to molest him, and he, in his thanks to the Great Spirit, asked that the bear might be saved from the hunter's bullet, and in answer to his prayer, the Great Spirit painted a white turtle on the bear's throat."

Eagle Feather passed the pipe to me and took up the story again, to which I listened attentively, but could not make out a word.

He stoped at last and José translated again.

"He says that a couple of miles from camp in a rock cave there lives a big she-bear with a white spot on its throat, and as a turtle is the totem of this clan the beast is called the medicine bear and is sacred. The Indians kill her cubs but never molest the old one. She kills their dogs and colts, yet for fear of incurring bad luck they tolerate it."

As Eagle Feather looked a bit droopy and his head nodded I concluded not to keep him up, so took my departure.

On our way to Grey Wolf's tepee José said that the mourning was beginning to pall on him already, but it would show disrespect to break off too soon.

Arriving at our tepee we crawled under our blankets, and in spite of the barking of dogs and coyotes, the snoring of the squaw and her children, to say nothing of the mosquitoes, we slept.

At sunrise we were out and ready for our breakfast, which was almost purely Indian, as José had too generously distributed the bacon and sugar among his relatives.

The day promised to be unusually hot, and at the suggestion of my boy friends I got out of my clothes and adopted the gee-string, moccasins, and deer toe necklace costume loaned me, and with a feather tied in my hair, I felt quite Indianlike and cool.

After hanging about the camp for a couple of hours I decided to take a ride, so catching my pony and taking my rifle and cartridge-belt set out to explore the hills to the northwards, in hope of seeing, perhaps getting a shot at, an antelope.

I had ridden an hour or more when I came to a group of rocky hills, and, dismounting, began to poke around, hoping I would run across the medicine bear or a cub. My hopes were more than realised, for in sliding down a slanting rock (with no small detriment to my cuticle) I heard a guttural growl to one side, and there was her ladyship, not twenty feet away, and working herself into a great rage.

She was apparently as big as my pony, and not wishing to either submit to an embrace or start a shooting match and incur complications with the Indians, I fled, and to my dismay found that the bear was hustling after me. When my pony saw this queer apparition coming breakneck down the hill he jumped against the light tie-rope, snapping it of course, and galloped off across the prairie, turning his head from side to side, evidently to gauge his gait to the bear's and my own.

A tall, slim tree at the bottom of the hill invited me to ascend, and hugging my rifle under my chin I scrambled up out of reach of the big claws fanning the air beneath me. The bear sniffed around the tree and finally sat down on its haunches and combed its side. Truly this seemed ludicrous; a man treed with a good gun and a belt full of cartridges; but Indians' superstitions will not stand trifling with.

In wriggling to get a better hold, my rifle slipped to the ground and the bear left off scratching to chew the sights off the gun. I was getting thirsty and the sun was cruelly hot. I yelled until I was hoarse and then settled down to broil in silence. A couple of times when I started to descend the bear would leisurely lumber over to greet me and I climbed a trifle higher instead.

About four o'clock or so I was almost crazy from the terrible sun burning, and my body was very sore. My

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tongue was as dry as a stone, and my limbs were so numb that I could scarcely keep my hold.

When it seemed as if I could hang on no longer and was really deliberating on coming down to take the chances, the bear came over to my tree, sniffed a bit, and then, as if she were tired of the vigil, turned and slowly walked up the hill, stopping at the top of the hill to take a last look, and then disappeared.

I fairly dropped from my perch. Ah! it seemed so good to stretch my numbed arms and legs. Picking up my slightly chewed gun I started for the camp.

About dusk I found my pony in a dry creek bed, pawing for water, and by careful manœuvring caught the short trail rope and was galloping to camp.

José looked a bit worried when I dismounted in front of the tepee, but when he heard my story he laughed until the tears streamed down his cheeks.

My sun-burning was no joke, however, for my body was covered with blisters, as I had not taken the precaution to rub myself well with grease on starting out. I did so now, though, and after dusting what little flour there was left over it, I felt a bit easier, my stomach having been attended to meanwhile.

The next day I was so swollen that my eyes were almost shut, and one glance at the bright sunshine drove me back to the darkest side of the tepee.

"Ugh!" grunted Grey Wolf's squaw, "white men afraid of sun, stay in dark, see heap, one, two tree day."

I felt as if I needed at least a month.

In the course of the day, Eagle Feather came over to see me, but as neither could understand the other, we smoked in silence, thoroughly appreciating the situation.

The fourth day after my adventure I came out dressed again as civilisation intended I should be, and was hailed on all sides as "Man-afraid-of-the-sun."

This was adding insult to injury, and I swore revenge on that bear.

That night José and I talked over the advisability of shooting the beast, and finally concluded that it would be all right if we could sweeten up the medicine man with a few dollars, and a sun-glass that I had, and then leave him to appease the wrath of his people.

Accordingly the next morning José presented the old fellow with a handful of silver dollars, the coveted sun-glass and a plug of tobacco for good measure, meanwhile explaining the sacrilege we wished to commit.

The medicine man thought deeply for a few moments to give the matter due consideration, but I could foretell what it would be by the way he eyed our offerings, and when he picked them up and walked away the bear's doom was sealed, *i.e.*, if we could kill her. José had an after-mourning feast to give his relatives, and, as it would not interest me, I tinkered my gun into serviceability. About two o' clock I started out, leaving José to follow when his entertainment was over.

I rode, slowly, the pony carefully picking his way, as he had lost a shoe and was tenderfoot. We slid down into the dry creek bed and clambered up the opposite side, every moment expecting José to catch up. Finally I perceived a bobbing speck in the distance and pulled up to wait, but instead of José it proved to be Little Elk, the medicine man's son.

"Where's José?" I asked when he came up.

"Ugh, José, he say he stay eat, send me same him."

This certainly seemed queer, for José rarely changed his mind.

"Well, I suppose it's all right," although I had many doubts, as I heard that this Little Elk was somewhat of a liar as well as dandy and drone. His painted face and

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immaculate clothes seemed proof of part of the tale. He was very chatty and wanted to know what my plans were, was I afraid, and a dozen other questions.

On reaching the hills I dismounted, and, after examining my gun and revolver, climbed the very hill I had retreated down so precipitately a few days before. I had asked my companion to come along, but he still bestrode his pony and seemed satisfied where he was. I reviled him sweetly, but it had no effect, he wouldn't move. Prowling around till almost sun down, I stumbled fairly on Mrs. Bear. She was very much at home and shuffled forward to greet me. I retreated, hoping to get her down hill, where, if there was any trouble, Little Elk could help me out.

My trot broke into a run, and after much slipping and sliding I reached the bottom of the hill to find that the brave (?) had fled, leaving me to conduct matters alone.

I cocked my rifle and waited for a good chance to present itself. The bear in crossing a slippery rock, lost

José crept out for the bear's hide.

her foothold and stumbled, giving me time to get in a good rib shot, which I followed up with a couple more, trying for the shoulder. The bear reared straight up and bit at the wounds.

The white mark at her throat showed for an instant, and my foresight bore on it like to a bull's eye, and with the crack of the rifle the bear trembled and then fell limp, rolling down hill almost to my feet.

A loud "Huy! Huy!" back of me, announced that my noble associate had returned. He came galloping up, hair and feathers flying, waving his gun, and spying the dead bear, and before I could remonstrate, poured in a couple of shots. A squint over my gun stopped that performance, but he was still much excited.

I finally managed to calm him down enough to have his assistance in skinning the bear, but by this time it had grown quite dark. My pony, smelling the blood, refused to carry the skin, so we loaded it on to Little Elk's, and after piling rocks over the carcase to keep out coyotes started for the village.

When the lights appeared I spurred on ahead to tell José the good news, and on arriving there I found him much excited and worried. He wanted to know where I had been, and so forth.

Finally I found that Little Elk had told him that I had decided to wait until the next day, as I was still too sore to move about much.

When he came to Grey Wolf's tepee and found that I had been gone all the afternoon he was mad all through, which did not go down any sooner when I told him I had killed the bear, and he swore vengeance on Little Elk.

"Where's that Indian?" he asked.

"Gone to his tepee, I presume. You go over and see him and get someone to bring the skin here while I get a bite to eat."

My supper over, and Grey Wolf's big pipe before me, I waited for José.

Presently he appeared, looking madder than ever.

"What's up?" I asked.

"It's all up," he replied, then added, "Listen to this: When I got to Little Elk's tepee all his relations were standing about looking at the bear skin and the old man was doing a song and dance about it. He invited them all inside and the Little Elk told them how he dreamt last night that the Great Spirit came and told him the medicine bear was an impostor and as he had never proved himself to be a brave, he must kill the beast and prove his bravery. Then he described how the white man who had gone with him fired several shots, and then he walked up close to the bear and killed it with one shot. What do you think of that?"

Now I was mad, and told my story, which José believed; but it did not get us the skin, and at my suggestion to go over and take it, José said that it would only make trouble, but that we could wait until midnight and then could steal it and "dig out."

Shortly after midnight Grey Wolf's squaw stole out to where our ponies were, saddled them up and put some dried meat in the saddle pockets.

José crept out and returned shortly, nearly bent double with the heavy bear hide. He had cut a split in Little Elk's tepee and dragged the bear skin almost from under them. We loaded it on José's big bay, and after giving the squaw some silver dollars, struck for the circle L.S.

We rode all night and at daylight camped in a dry creek bed.

I was almost dead for sleep, so took some forty winks or so while José kept guard. Late in the afternoon we struck camp and took up the trail again.

Passing some low hills we saw what looked like an Indian against the sky line.

José took a chance shot at it, and the thing disappeared. In all probability it was Little Elk looking over the ridge, hoping for a chance to steal the bear skin again.

We rode all night and camped at daylight as before, and in three days we reached the ranch, where I gave the hide to an old hunter to tan for me.

The punchers thought it a rare joke—stealing what belonged to us.

We never saw the Indians again, José remarking that he did not care for his mother's side of the house, anyhow.

When the hide was tanned we set out for Santa Fé, where I parted with José, and taking my precious bear skin with me, left for home.

B. O. Broome.

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PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF.

DEAFNESS, as we know, is nearly always the result of a disease of the ear. Defects of hearing may vary from a very slight decrease of the hearing powers to total deafness. With a good many people the hearing is far from being normal, although they may be unaware of this fact, and it is only when the defect increases that they begin to notice it. The majority of those who are deaf have both ears affected; when, as is often the case, deafness is more pronounced on one side than on the other, they usually believe that the hearing of only one ear, the worse, is impaired. It is always very difficult to know, when questioning a patient, for how long the infirmity has been present. Very often he will answer that he has only been deaf for the last ten or twelve months—that is to say, since the hardness of hearing became more marked; but further inquiries will generally elicit the fact that the ear trouble began years before.

As a rule, a deaf man does not like to acknowledge his infirmity, and he will take great pains to conceal it. By concentrating all his attention, he may be able to gather the sense of the speaker's words; or, if he has had a good deal of practice, he may succeed in reading, so to speak, the words on the lips of the person who is addressing him. This explains the peculiarity sometimes mentioned by deaf people who are surprised that they should be better able to understand during the day than at night, and who also want to know why they cannot understand, so well, people with a beard or a heavy moustache.

Only those who have lost, even partially, the sense of hearing know what amount of discomfort that sad infirmity entails. Social intercourse becomes an impossibility; people don't like conversing when they have to shout at the top of their voice to make themselves understood.

Some twenty or thirty years ago, to be deaf meant to be incurable. Medical men, as a rule, were little acquainted with ear diseases, and held it was better not to meddle with an organ of which so little was known. The method of non-interference was, as it were, the only treatment recognised, not only in ordinary cases of deafness, but also when there existed a discharge from the ears. When it is remembered that purulent diseases of the ear are the most frequent causes of cerebral abscess, and often give rise to decay of the ossicles, facial paralysis, meningitis, and even embolism, it may be wondered how many lives have thus been lost by lack of proper treatment. The popular prejudice still existing, that a discharge must not be interfered with, must be uprooted at any cost, as also the belief that deafness cannot be cured. Ear diseases are nowadays no more incurable than any other organic affection.

To realise this fact, all who are interested in the matter should read the January issue of the "Journal for the Deaf," which contains most useful information on the curative treatment of deafness. The publication is issued by the Drouet Institute, and is forwarded under cover, free of charge, to any person who applies for it to the secretary, 72 Regent's Park Road, London, N.W. This medical establishment, since it was first opened twelve years ago in Paris by the late Dr. Drouet, then in Brussels, and lastly, in 1896, in London, has effected the cure of several thousands of deaf people. In contradistinction with all others, the Drouet method of treatment is based on the sole employment of medicines: no instruments or apparatus whatever are used. The principal of these medicines is a crescent-shaped plaster, which is applied every night, and during the night only, behind the ears.

The preparation does not "draw," but, on the contrary, acts by gradual absorption, and in this way reaches the diseased parts, which could not possibly be touched otherwise, and this is the whole secret of the success of the treatment. This also explains how people who had previously followed many treatments without avail have ultimately been able to recover their hearing. The "Journal for the Deaf" records several such cases, and altogether gives an account of nearly two hundred recent cures.

It may be interesting to mention here a few of these cures, to better illustrate the remarkable curative powers of the method.

Miss Gertie F., a shop-assistant, of Victoria Street, Wolverhampton, had been affected for the last four years with chronic deafness, at first in the right ear and then in the left. The right ear was the worst; the tick of a watch could only be heard at a distance of two inches, and the lady experienced distressing buzzing noises. Miss G. F. had already followed three different treatments before applying to the Drouet Institute, but to no purpose.

"In each treatment," she stated when submitting her case, "I have been given a medicine for the throat, and at the hospital a white powder to inhale."

Deafness, however, could not possibly yield to such methods, the seat of the disease being the internal ear; but the Drouet treatment was rapidly successful, a cure being obtained in eight weeks.

Extracts are given hereafter of a letter written by the lady a short time ago:

"Victoria Street, Wolverhampton,
"November 7th, 1900.

"I am writing to thank you for the treatment I have had from your Institute. I feel I am all right, and the noises in my ear have quite gone, so I really think there is no need for me to have any more. I shall certainly recommend your valuable Institute to anybody I know who are deaf. "MISS GERTIE F."

(The full name and address will be given to any applicant.)

Miss Annie M., a matron, of Berkhamsted, Herts,

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had for the last eight years gradually grown deaf, on account of a disease of the nose and throat. Influenza had aggravated the condition, leaving the patient, as is often the case, with a running of the ears; buzzing noises and pains in the ears were also experienced.

The disease assuming such a complicated turn, Miss A. M. saw a physician, who prescribed painting with glycerine and tannin, and gave a gargle; but no relief being obtained, and the lady hearing of the remarkable results given by the Drouet treatment, decided to have a trial.

The case was submitted to the Drouet Institute towards the end of August, and less than a month afterwards a complete cure was reported, as may be seen from the following letter:

"Berkhamsted, Herts, September 24th, 1900.

"I have used the antiseptic treatment, which has entirely stopped the discharge. I can hear all right now.—Yours faithfully, Miss A. M."

(The full address will be gladly given by the Drouet Institute.)

A reverend gentleman, Mr. A. W. A., suffering from the same complaint, after only a fortnight's treatment could write:

"September 24th, 1900.

"I am glad to say your treatment has been very successful, and I can hear quite well now. I do not wish my name put in the paper, as I know how much inconvenience and annoyance it causes; but I am much obliged for your advice, and shall be glad to recommend your treatment whenever I can.

"A. W. A."

(The letter is on view at the Drouet Institute.)

James E. Owen, twenty-eight, a turner, of 13 Carbrook Street, Attercliffe Common, Sheffield. Deafness of twenty-four years' standing, following scarlet-fever, very pronounced on the left side. Intermittent noises in the head, and also offensive discharge from the ears. Cold aggravates the affection.

Treatment was prescribed, and three weeks later Mr. J. Owen reported his cure, which he confirmed in the following letter:

"I am distributing your papers to those that I know are suffering from deafness, with the hope that they will place themselves under your treatment, as it has done me good. I have not had a relapse since, so I think I am about cured altogether.—Yours, etc.,

"E. Owen."

Mr. James Shaw, fifty-six, a bank-messenger, of 59, Meadow Street, Moss Side, Manchester. Deafness was sudden, affecting first the left ear then the right ear. The patient could only hear the ticking of a watch when held quite close to the ear. Noises were experienced, and an offensive discharge was running from the left ear.

Treatment was prescribed, and sixteen days afterwards the patient reported a complete recovery:

"I am glad to state that my hearing is now as well as it has been for some years past. I was afraid I should suffer permanently, but under your treatment, for which I am deeply grateful, my hearing is now very distinct.

"You have perfect liberty to use this as seems best.—Believe me, &c., J. Shaw."

Mr. T. Elliott, of Consett, had suffered for the last five years from a very grave ear disease. Deafness was almost complete, and attended by a distressing discharge of the left ear. Noises in the head were also experienced. Mr. Elliott saw a short time ago an account of the Drouet treatment in the paper, and decided to have a trial. By means of the pathological report form, which is sent by the Drouet Institute to patients unable to leave home, he was enabled to submit his case very clearly for examination, and commenced treatment towards the beginning of September last. On the 22nd of the same month—that is to say, in less than three weeks—a complete cure was reported, and this was confirmed in the following letter:

22, Alexandra Street, Consett,
17th November, 1900.

"I am proud to say that my hearing continues to keep splendid, also that the discharge has entirely stopped. My opinion, which I have told many that have asked me about my hearing, is that yours is the most marvellous cure of the age. I am doing my best to make it known to those who are troubled with what is mentioned in your journal.

"T. Elliott."

Neglected or badly-treated nose and throat affections are liable to extend to the ear, and to cause deafness of a more or less grave character. In fact, practically all auricular affections known as catarrh of the mid-ear are the consequence of a disease of the nose and throat, and it is, therefore, of the greatest importance that these diseases should be treated from the start to prevent any possible complication. The Drouet Institute, as a matter of course, treats nose and throat affections, and that it is no less successful in dealing with them may be seen from the numerous reports given in the "Journal for the Deaf."

Let us state again that a copy of this publication will be forwarded gratis to any applicant. All persons affected with a disease of the ear, nose, or throat, should read it; and also ask for the report form, which will allow them to submit their case to the Drouet Institute. This form is sent free of charge, and the advice given is always gratuitous. For all additional information, write to the Secretary of the Drouet Institute, 72 Regent's Park Road, London, N.W.

Personal consultations are held daily, except Sunday, from two to four p.m. In this case a fee is charged for examination. Special consultations may also be had at any time by making an appointment with the consulting physician.

The letters, of which extracts have been given in this article, are on view, amongst hundreds of others, at the Drouet Institute, where they may be inspected every day, except Sunday, from ten a.m. till five p.m.

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THAT DIAMOND RING.

THE disappearance of that diamond ring was a great puzzle at the time, and the whole affair remained a mystery to my uncle till the day of his death; but the key to the enigma was given to me some time afterwards.

My uncle was an old bachelor. He had very kindly taken charge of me when, quite a boy, I was left an orphan. He was not without his faults, and I can't say that he was particularly generous in the way he paid his servants, but to me he was certainly good, and I really loved the old chap.

I was about twenty-one and was studying for the law. I was to be a barrister, but if I had had my way I should have been a detective, for the unravelling of intricate problems connected with crime always had a fascination for me.

But my uncle laughed at the idea; if it had been possible for me to pass an examination and gain a degree that would have made me at once chief of the Criminal Investigation Department, I might have had my wish, but as it was, my uncle declined to listen to my proposals. I was willing to serve in the ranks, but that did not suit him.

"You'll do better as a barrister, my boy!" he cried, on the last occasion that the question came up for discussion.

And the tone of his voice was sufficient to indicate that he had said the last word on the subject.

My uncle was having his house done up and the electric light was being installed. It was one afternoon, while his private bedroom and dressing-room were under operation for the introduction of the new illuminant, that my uncle came home rather unexpectedly and declared that he must dress and be off to an important meeting.

His dressing-room was simply destitute of furniture, and two men were at work in his bedroom, just giving some finishing touches to it. But the old gentleman said that their presence would not matter and they might go on with their work, for he only had to change his coat and waistcoat, and put on another collar and tie—or something of that sort, I don't quite remember now. Anyhow, he proceeded with his toilet, aided by his valet, and took no notice of the men. He had his peculiarities as well as his failings had my uncle.

My uncle—by the way, his name was John Hudson—had a diamond ring to which he was much attached because it had been given to him in recognition of his services to some society or institution; I believe it was valued at £60. He took this ring off his finger and laid it on the small dressing-table which stood in his bedroom temporarily; when he looked for it, in order to put it on his finger again, it was gone.

The first intimation I had of the occurrence was the arrival of the maid to summon me from the small chamber which we called a library to my uncle's room.

"I don't know what's the matter, sir," she said, with a very scared expression on her face, "but the master is in his bedroom with the door locked, and he shouted to me to fetch you and would not open the door. And he was very cross because I didn't understand him at first—you know the door is thick, Mr. James, and the master didn't speak quite plain, he seemed upset."

Much puzzled by this information, I made my way immediately to my uncle's room, the door was unlocked to allow me to enter, and then locked again. In a few words my uncle made me acquainted with the facts.

"As soon as I missed the ring, James," he concluded, "I locked this door and the one leading to the empty dressing-room, and sent for you. That ring is gone, but it must be found before these men are permitted to go out of this room."

"What do you propose to do, uncle?" I asked, looking from one to another of the occupants of the room.

"Search them!" snorted my uncle. "They won't object—if they are honest, and a search will prove their innocence and clear away the suspicion which rests on all three at the present moment. That ring has not gone out of this room—I can swear to that—and I intend to find it."

I thought of suggesting that we should hunt about the room before we proceeded to subject the three men to the indignity of a search, but my uncle anticipated me.

"While you were coming here," he explained, "Jackson (the valet) looked round about the table to see if it had dropped on the floor, but he could not find it. Here's a chance for your detective skill, my boy!".

I thought that was rather an unkind remark, but I looked over it because I knew that the old gentleman was in a bad temper.

Still, perhaps there was a chance for me after all.

I made a quick survey of the room without moving from the spot on which I stood.

I was bound to confess that there was no earthly chance of that ring getting out of the room except by being carried out; it could not have been thrown out of the window, for that was shut and fastened. From where I stood I could see that window of the dressing-room was also shut and fastened.

There was no other possible outlet.

That ring was either in the possession of one of the occupants of the room or it was hidden away in some crevice.

The first thing to be done was to make sure that it was not concealed on the person of either of the three men—the valet and the two workmen, and then we must ransack the whole room to find the place of concealment.

As each man was searched, he would pass into the dressing-room so that there should be no possibility of the ring being handed to him by the remaining two or one, as the case might be.

Well, we began the search. The men protested, but complied. My uncle did not go in for half-measures;

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each man had to take off his waistcoat, trousers, boots and socks, and the valet would have to take off his coat in addition, he being the only one of the three who was wearing a coat. The garments were handed to me, and I searched and felt along linings, and in short thoroughly overhauled everything. I actually went so far as to make each man open his mouth and cough, in case he might be practising the old Hindoo trick of holding the ring somewhere in his throat. While I was operating, my uncle kept his eyes on the suspects.

It seemed rather an extravagant proceeding, but it was carried out. I took the workmen first, and each one passed into the dressing-room and was let out by another door by myself. Then came the turn of the valet.

"I am sorry to do it, Jackson," said my uncle in an apologetic tone, "but I must serve you the same as the others. It will at least clear you of suspicion."

"I shall not resist, Mr. Hudson, but I submit under protest," returned the valet. He spoke in a dignified manner, and I felt really sorry for him. His face was very pale, but he showed no emotion; he was not the kind of man to show his feelings; he always had them wonderfully under control.

He took off his coat and he'd it out to me, but it was not quite within my reach. I stepped forward to take it from him, and at the same time—with a hasty apology for his rudeness—he advanced to hand it to me. The result was a slight collision and the coat nearly dropped to the floor, but he deftly caught it as it fell and handed it to me.

There was nothing in the coat, except, of course, the man's own property. The waistcoat and trousers, boots and socks followed—in a word, I discovered nothing. Jackson in his turn passed into the dressing-room and out through the other door.

"I'll turn the room inside out! I *will* find it!" shouted my uncle, more annoyed than ever. "Let us begin at once!"

"But what about your meeting?" I asked.

"The meeting be—adjourned!" growled the old gentleman, angrily. "Let's get to work!"

We turned that room upside down; we shifted everything, turned up the carpet, looked on every ledge and in every nook; we even lifted up the trap of the register stove and swept down the soot; but in the end we were forced to own ourselves beaten.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, as an idea struck me. "Perhaps it isn't missing after all—perhaps you slipped it into your own waistcoat pocket!"

I felt quite relieved as I made this suggestion.

"Perhaps I didn't," snarled my uncle. "Do you think that I'm such an idiot to imitate the man who pushed his spectacles up to the top of his head and then went hunting for them all over the house? That was the first thing I thought of, and it doesn't say much for your detective skill that the idea did not occur to you before we began the search."

I felt rather sat on, and contented myself with the remark that, as there was nothing more to be done, we might as well get rid of our sweeps' disguise and make ourselves presentable.

I left my uncle to his own devices, while I went to my room to wash and change my clothes. I did not feel like any more study, and went out for a walk.

As I passed out of the house I met Jackson in the hall.

"No, it isn't fair," I replied to his inquiry. "It's most mysterious. My uncle will no doubt salve your wounded feelings, Jackson; it was rather too bad. And those workmen, tell them to come to me to-morrow and I'll make it right with them. Dashed if I don't think that he lost it before he came in, and only fancied that he took it off!"

"That appears to me the most probable," remarked Jackson deferentially. "Shall I go up and help him to dress, sir, do you think?"

"You might go and make the offer, Jackson," I suggested. "We made ourselves in a beastly mess, and I have had to change my clothes."

I never inquired whether Jackson followed my suggestion or not. The ring was never found, and I settled down to the conviction that my uncle had lost it outside; but I did not open the subject to him—I preferred to let matters rest.

I had thought that one of the men had swallowed the ring, but I dismissed this notion as altogether improbable; I doubt whether either of them could have done such a thing, and had the ring passed into the throat, it is safe to say that the swallower would have required a surgical operation very soon afterwards. As I had previously learnt, Jackson was one of those who have a small swallow, so the hypothesis was out of the question so far as he was concerned. I found out some time later that my uncle had caused all three men to be "shadowed" for several days, but without discovering anything.

Jackson never got over the indignity, and he gave notice to leave before a month had elapsed. He said that he would refer his next employer to my uncle for a reference, and the reference was taken up in a few days. Thus Jackson passed out of our sight.

About a year afterwards I received a letter, bearing the London postmark and written by an unknown hand. I opened it and read it. There was no address and it was signed "T. Jackson."

I am certain that you will be interested to know something about that diamond ring. I took it. I was hard pressed, and I could not resist the temptation, but I was not prepared for the rigorous measures which Mr. Hudson took to discover it. What a pity he did not find it! I am writing this to you, Mr. James, because it may help you in any other detective work which you may undertake!

I had the ring in my waistcoat pocket, and I had to hit upon some desperate expedient in order to get rid of it. I wanted to hide it where I might have the chance of finding it again, but in any case I was bound to get rid of it. Your uncle did not give me the chance to hide it anywhere about the room. And there I was with the ring in my possession when you began to search me!

I had it in by left hand while I was holding out my coat with my right hand. I purposely made you step forward and then did the same myself, so as to bring about a collision. When I caught the coat, I brushed against you, and I put the ring into the little ticket pocket on the outside of your coat. I knew that it was a peculiarity of yours to have that little pocket made deep, and to carry odd things in it, so I concluded that if you felt anything in that pocket without actually putting your finger into it—you would not notice it. These pockets are now made inside the coat; let me advise you to adopt that fashion. It looks bad to have a little pocket bulging out on the outside!

I was afraid that the ring might fall out while you were stooping about the floor, lifting up the carpet, but it didn't; so when I found you had changed your things, I went to your room, took the ring and hid it in a safe place.

I purposely applied for a situation and got my employer to write for a reference, but I never took up the situation. I thought it best to clear out of the country—I owed too much money to feel comfortable. I am doing very well, and you will never know where I am, for this letter will be posted in London for me. Why do I write? Because I can't resist the temptation of having a laugh at you!

I thought it best to destroy this letter, and my uncle never knew that I had received it. GEORGE KNIGHT.

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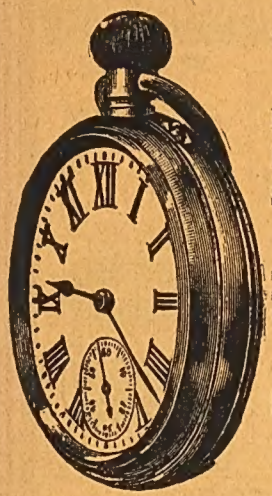

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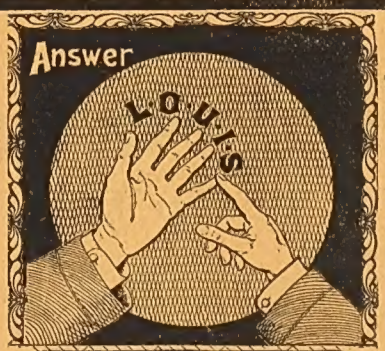

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